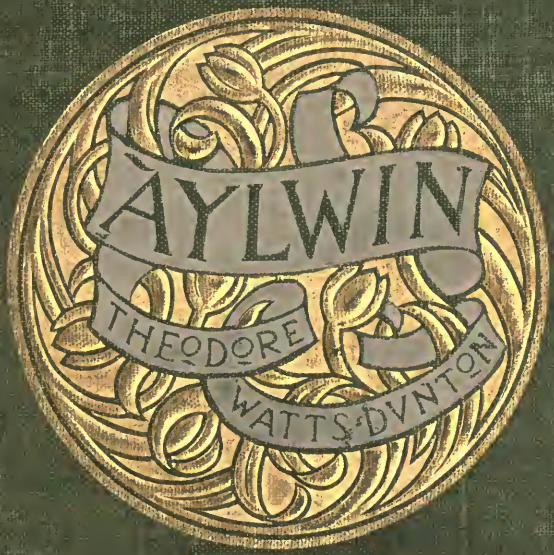
AYLWIN
THEODORE
WATTS-DUNTON

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# Aylwin

BY

Theodore Watts-Dunton

Author of "The Coming of Love: Rhona Boswell's Story"

"Quoth Ja'afar, bowing low his head:—'Bold is the donkey-driver, O Ka'dee! and bold the ka'dee who dares say what he will believe, what disbelieve—not knowing in any wise the mind of Allah—not knowing in any wise his own heart, and what it shall some day suffer.'"

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# I.

# The Cymric Child

# I.—THE CYMRIC CHILD

## I.

"Those who in childhood have had solitary communings with the sea know the sea's prophecy. They know that there is a deeper sympathy between the sea and the soul of man than other people dream of. They know that the water seems nearer akin than the land to the spiritual world, inasmuch as it is one and indivisible, and has motion, and answers to the mysterious call of the winds, and is the writing tablet of the moon and stars. When a child who, born beside the sea, and beloved by the sea, feels suddenly, as he gazes upon it, a dim sense of pity and warning; when there comes, or seems to come, a shadow across the waves, with never a cloud in the sky to cast it; when there comes a shuddering as of wings that move in dread or ire, then such a child feels as if the blood-hounds of calamity are let loose upon him or upon those he loves; he feels that the sea has told him all it dares tell or can. And, in other moods of fate, when beneath a cloudy sky the myriad dimples of the sea begin to sparkle as though the sun were shining bright upon them, such a child feels, as he gazes at it, that the sea is telling him of some great joy near at hand, or, at least, not far off."

One lovely summer afternoon a little boy was sitting on the edge of the cliff that skirts the old churchyard of Raxton-on-Sea. He was sitting on the grass close to the brink of the indentation cut by the water into the horse-shoe curve called by the fishermen Mousetrap Cove; sitting there as still as an image of a boy in stone, at the forbidden spot where the wooden fence proclaimed the crumbling hollow crust to be specially dangerous—sitting and looking across the sheer deep gulf below.

Flinty Point on his right was sometimes in purple shadow

and sometimes shining in the sun; Needle Point on his left was sometimes in purple shadow and sometimes shining in the sun; and beyond these headlands spread now the wide purple, and now the wide sparkle of the open sea. The very gulls, wheeling as close to him as they dared, seemed to be frightened at the little boy's peril. Straight ahead he was gazing, however—gazing so intently that his eyes must have been seeing very much or else very little of that limitless world of light and coloured shade. On account of certain questions connected with race that will be raised in this narrative, I must dwell a little while upon the child's personal appearance, and especially upon his colour. Natural or acquired, it was one that might be almost called unique; as much like a young Gypsy's colour as was compatible with respectable descent, and yet not a Gypsy's colour. A deep undertone of "Romany brown" seemed breaking through that peculiar kind of ruddy golden glow which no sunshine can give till it has itself been deepened and coloured and enriched by the responsive kisses of the sea.

Moreover, there was a certain something in his eyes that was not Gypsy-like—a something which is not uncommonly seen in the eyes of boys born along that coast, whether those eyes be black or blue or grey; a something which cannot be described, but which seems like a reflex of the daring gaze of that great land-conquering and daring sea. Very striking was this expression as he momentarily turned his face landward to watch one of the gulls that had come wheeling up the cliffs towards the flinty grey tower of the church—the old deserted church, whose graveyard the sea had already half washed away. As his eyes followed the bird's movements, however, this daring sea-look seemed to be growing gradually weaker and weaker. At last it faded away altogether, and by the time his face was turned again towards the sea, the look I have tried to describe was supplanted by such a gaze as that gull would give were it hiding behind a boulder with a broken wing. A mist of cruel trouble was covering his eyes, and soon the mist had grown into two bright glittering pearly tears, which, globing and trembling, larger and larger, were at length big enough to drown both eyes; big enough to drop, shining, on the grass; big enough to blot out altogether the most brilliant picture that sea and sky could make. For that little boy had begun to learn a lesson which life was going to teach him fully—the lesson

that shining sails in the sunny wind, and black trailing bands of smoke passing here and there along the horizon, and silvery gulls dipping playfully into the green and silver waves (nay, all the beauties and all the wonders of the world), make but a blurred picture to eyes that look through the lens of tears. However, with a brown hand brisk and angry, he brushed away these tears, like one who should say, "This kind of thing will never do."

Indeed, so hardy was the boy's face—tanned by the sun, hardened and bronzed by the wind, reddened by the brine—that tears seemed entirely out of place there. The meaning of those tears must be fully accounted for, and if possible fully justified, for this little boy is to be the hero of this story. In other words he is Henry Aylwin; that is to say, myself; and those who know me now in the full vigour of manhood, a lusty knight of the alpenstock of some repute, will be surprised to know what troubled me. They will be surprised to know that owing to a fall from the cliff I was for about two years a cripple.

This is how it came about. Rough and yielding as were the paths, called "gangways," connecting the cliffs with the endless reaches of sand below, they were not rough enough, or yielding enough, or in any way dangerous enough for me.

So I used to fashion "gangways" of my own; I used to descend the cliff at whatsoever point it pleased me, clinging to the lumps of sandy earth with the prehensile power of a spider-monkey. Many a warning had I had from the good fishermen and sea-folk, that some day I should fall from top to bottom—fall and break my neck. A laugh was my sole answer to these warnings; for, with the possession of perfect health, I had inherited that instinctive belief in good luck which perfect health will often engender.

However, my punishment came at last. The coast, which is yielding gradually to the sea, is famous for sudden and gigantic landslips. These landslips are sometimes followed, at the return of the tide, by a further fall, called a "settlement." The word "settlement" explains itself, perhaps. No matter how smooth the sea, the return of the tide seems on that coast to have a strange magnetic power upon the land, and the *débris* of a landslip will sometimes, though not always, respond to it by again falling and settling into new and permanent shapes.

Now, on the morning after a great landslip, when the coastguard, returning on his beat, found a cove where, half-an-hour before, he had left his own cabbages growing, I, in spite of all warnings, had climbed the heap of *débris* from the sands, and while I was hallooing triumphantly to two companions below—the two most impudent-looking urchins, barefooted and unkempt, that ever a gentleman's son forgathered with—a great mass of loose earth settled, carrying me with it in its fall. I was taken up for dead.

It was, however, only a matter of broken ribs and a damaged leg. And there is no doubt that if the local surgeon had not been allowed to have his own way, I should soon have been cured. As it was I became a cripple. The great central fact—the very pivot upon which all the wheels of my life have since been turning—is that for two years during the impressionable period of childhood I walked on crutches.

It must not be supposed that my tears—the tears which at this moment were blotting out the light and glory of the North Sea in the sun—came from the pain I was suffering. They came from certain terrible news, which even my brother Frank had been careful to keep from me, but which had fallen from the lips of my father—the news that I was not unlikely to be a cripple for life. From that moment I had become a changed being, solitary and sometimes morose. I would come and sit staring at the ocean, meditating on things in general, but chiefly on things connected with cripples, asking myself, as now, whether life would be bearable on crutches.

At my heart were misery and anger and such revolt as is, I hope, rarely found in the heart of a child. I had sat down outside the rails at this most dangerous point along the cliff, wondering whether or not it would crumble beneath me. For this lameness coming to me, who had been so active, who had been, indeed, the little athlete and pugilist of the sands, seemed to have isolated me from my fellow-creatures to a degree that is inconceivable to me now. A stubborn will and masterful pride made me refuse to accept a disaster such as many a nobler soul than mine has, I am conscious, borne with patience. My nature became soured by asking in vain for sympathy at home; my loneliness drove me—silent, haughty and aggressive—to haunt the churchyard, and sit at the edge of the cliff, gazing wistfully at the sea and

the sands which could not be reached on crutches. Like a wounded sea-gull, I retired and took my trouble alone.

How could I help taking it alone when none would sympathise with me? My brother Frank called me "The Black Savage," and I half began to suspect myself of secret impulses of a savage kind. Once I heard my mother murmur, as she stroked Frank's rosy cheeks and golden curls, "My poor Henry is a strange, proud boy!" Then, looking from my crutches to Frank's beautiful limbs, she said, "How providential that it was not the elder! Providence is kind." She meant kind to the House of Aylwin. I often wonder whether she guessed that I heard her. I often wonder whether she knew how I had loved her.

This is how matters stood with me on that summer afternoon, when I sat on the edge of the cliff in a kind of dull, miserable dream. Suddenly, at the moment when the huge mass of clouds had covered the entire surface of the water between Flinty Point and Needle Point with their rich purple shadow, it seemed to me that the waves began to sparkle and laugh in a joyful radiance which they were making for themselves. And at that same moment an unwonted sound struck my ear from the churchyard behind me—a strange sound indeed in that deserted place—that of a childish voice singing.

Was, then, the mighty ocean writing symbols for an unhappy child to read? My father, from whose book, *The Veiled Queen*, the extract with which this chapter opens is taken, would unhesitatingly have answered "Yes."

"Destiny, no doubt, in the Greek drama concerns itself only with the great," says he, in that wonderful book of his. "But who are the great? With the unseen powers, mysterious and imperious, who govern while they seem not to govern all that is seen, who are the great? In a world where man's loftiest ambitions are to higher intelligences childish dreams, where his highest knowledge is ignorance, where his strongest strength is derision—who are the great? Are they not the few men and women and children on the earth who greatly love?"

## II.

So sweet a sound as that childish voice I had never heard before. I held my breath and listened.

Into my very being that child-voice passed, and it was a new music and a new joy. I can give the reader no notion of it, because there is not in nature anything with which I can compare it. The blackcap has a climacteric note, just before his song collapses and dies, so full of pathos and tenderness that often, when I had been sitting on a gate in Wilderness Road, it had affected me more deeply than any human words. But here was a note sweet and soft as that, and yet charged with a richness no blackcap's song had ever borne, because no blackcap has ever felt the joys and sorrows of a young human soul.

The voice was singing in a language which seemed strange to me then, but has been familiar enough since:

"Bore o'r cwmwl aur,
Eryri oedd dy gaer,
Brenhin o wyllt a gwar,
Gwawr ysbrydau."*

Intense curiosity now made me suddenly forget my troubles. I scrambled back through the trees not far from that spot and looked around. There, sitting upon a grassy grave, beneath one of the windows of the church, was a little girl, somewhat younger than myself apparently. With her head bent back she was gazing up at the sky and singing, while one of her little hands was pointing to a tiny cloud that hovered like a golden feather over her head. The sun, which had suddenly become very bright, shining on her glossy hair (for she was bareheaded) gave it a metallic lustre, and it was difficult to say what was the colour, dark bronze or black. So completely absorbed was she in watching the cloud to which her strange song or incantation seemed ad-

*Morning of the golden cloud,
Eryri was thy castle,
King of the wild and tame,
Glory of the spirits of air!
Eryri—the Place of Eagles, *i. e.*, Snowdon.

dressed, that she did not observe me when I rose and went towards her. Over her head, high up in the blue, a lark that was soaring towards the same gauzy cloud was singing, as if in rivalry. As I slowly approached the child, I could see by her forehead (which in the sunshine seemed like a globe of pearl), and especially by her complexion, that she was uncommonly lovely, and I was afraid lest she should look down before I got close to her, and so see my crutches before her eyes encountered my face. She did not, however, seem to hear me coming along the grass (so intent was she with her singing) until I was close to her, and throwing my shadow over her. Then she suddenly lowered her head and looked at me in surprise. I stood transfixed at her astonishing beauty. No other picture has ever taken such possession of me. In its every detail it lives before me now. Her eyes (which at one moment seemed blue grey, at another violet) were shaded by long black lashes, curving backward in a most peculiar way, and these matched in hue her eyebrows, and the tresses that were tossed about her tender throat and were quivering in the sunlight.

All this picture I did not take in at once; for at first I could see nothing but those quivering, glittering, changeful eyes turned up into my face. Gradually the other features (especially the sensitive full-lipped mouth) grew upon me as I stood silently gazing. Here seemed to me a more perfect beauty than had ever come to me in my loveliest dreams of beauty beneath the sea. Yet it was not her beauty, perhaps, so much as the look she gave me, that fascinated me, melted me.

As she gazed in my face there came over hers a look of pleased surprise, and then, as her eyes passed rapidly down my limbs and up again, her face was not overshadowed with the look of disappointment which I had waited for—yes, waited for, like a pinioned criminal for the executioner's uplifted knife; but the smile of pleasure was still playing about the little mouth, while the tender young eyes were moistening rapidly with the dews of a kind of pity that was new to me, a pity that did not blister the pride of the lonely wounded sea-gull, but soothed, healed, and blessed.

Remember that I was a younger son—that I was swarthy—that I was a cripple—and that my mother—had Frank. It was as though my heart must leap from my breast towards that child. Not a word had she spoken, but she had said

what the little maimed "fighting Hal" yearned to hear, and without *knowing* that he yearned.

I restrained myself, and did not yield to the feeling that impelled me to throw my arms about her neck in an ecstasy of wonder and delight. After a second or two she again threw back her head to gaze at the golden cloud.

"Look!" said she, suddenly clapping her hands, "it's over both of us now."

"What is it?" I said.

"The Dukkeripen," she said, "the Golden Hand. Sinfi and Rhona both say the Golden Hand brings luck: what *is* luck?"

I looked up at the little cloud which to me seemed more like a golden feather than a golden hand. But I soon bent my eyes down again to look at her.

While I stood looking at her, the tall figure of a man came out of the church. This was Tom Wynne. Besides being the organist of Raxton "New Church," Tom was also (for a few extra shillings a week) custodian of the "Old Church," this deserted pile within whose precincts we now were. Tom's features wore an expression of virtuous indignation which puzzled me, and evidently frightened the little girl. He locked the door, and walked unsteadily towards us. He seemed surprised to see me there, and his features relaxed into a bland civility.

"This is (hiccup) Master Aylwin, Winifred," he said.

The child looked at me again with the same smile. Her alarm had fled.

"This is my little daughter Winifred," said Tom with a pompous bow.

I was astonished. I never knew that Wynne had a daughter, for, intimate as he and I had become, he had actually never mentioned his daughter before.

"My *only* daughter," Tom repeated.

He then told me, with many hiccups, that, since her mother's death (that is to say from her very infancy), Winifred had been brought up by an aunt in Wales. "Quite a lady, her aunt is," said Tom proudly, "and Winifred has come to spend a few weeks with her father."

He said this in a grandly paternal tone—a tone that seemed meant to impress upon her how very much obliged she ought to feel to him for consenting to be her father; and,

judging from the look the child gave him, she *did* feel very much obliged.

Suddenly, however, a thought seemed to come back upon Tom, a thought which my unexpected appearance on the scene had driven from his drunken brain. The look of virtuous indignation returned, and, staring at the little girl through glazed eyes, he said in the tremulous and tearful voice of a deeply injured parent:

"Winifred, I thought I heard you singing one of them heathen Gypsy songs that you learned of the Gypsies in Wales."

"No, father," said she, "it was the song they sing in Shire-Carnarvon about the golden cloud over Snowdon and the spirits of the air."

"Yes," said Tom, "but a little while ago you were singing a Gypsy song—a downright heathen Gypsy song. I heard it about half an hour ago when I was in the church."

The beautiful little head drooped in shame.

"I'm s'prised at you, Winifred! When I come to think whose daughter you are,—mine!—I'm s'prised at you," continued Tom, whose virtuous indignation waxed with every word.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" said the child. "I won't do it any more."

This contrition of the child's only fanned the flame of Tom's virtuous indignation.

"Here am I," said he, "the most (hiccup) respectable man in two parishes,—except Master Aylwin's father, of course, —here am I, the organ-player for the Christianest of all the Christian churches along the coast, and here's my daughter sings heathen songs just like a Gypsy or a tinker. I'm s'prised at you, Winifred."

I had often seen Tom in a dignified state of liquor, but the pathetic expression of injured virtue that again overspread his face so changed it, that I had some difficulty myself in realising how entirely the tears filling his eyes and the grief at his heart were of alcoholic origin. And as to the little girl, she began to sob piteously.

"Oh dear, oh dear, what a wicked girl I am!" said she.

This exclamation, however, aroused my ire against Tom; and as I always looked upon him as my special paid henchman, who, in return for such services as supplying me with tiny boxing-gloves, and fishing-tackle, and bait, during my

hale days, and tame rabbits now that I was a cripple, mostly contrived to possess himself of my pocket-money, I had no hesitation in exclaiming:

"Why, Tom, you know you're drunk, you silly old fool!"

At this Tom turned his mournful and reproachful gaze upon me, and began to weep anew. Then he turned and addressed the sea, uplifting his hand in oratorical fashion:—

"Here's a young gentleman as I've been more than a father to—yes, more than a father to—for when did his own father ever give him a ferret-eyed rabbit, a real ferret-eyed rabbit thoroughbred?"

"Why, I gave you one of my five-shilling pieces for it," said I; "and the rabbit was in a consumption and died in three weeks."

But Tom still addressed the sea.

"When did his own father give him," said he, "the longest thigh-bone that the sea ever washed out of Raxton churchyard?"

"Why, I gave you *two* of my five-shilling pieces for *that*," said I, "and next day you went and borrowed the bone, and sold it over again to Dr. Munro for a quart of beer."

"When did his own father give him a beautiful skull for a money-box, and make an oak lid to it, and keep it for him because his mother wouldn't have it in the house?"

"Ah, but where's the money that was in it, Tom? Where's the money?" said I, flourishing one of my crutches, for I was worked up to a state of high excitement when I recalled my own wrongs and Tom's frauds, and I forgot his relationship to the little girl. "Where are the bright new half-crowns that were *in* the money-box when I left it with you—the half-crowns that got changed into pennies, Tom? Where are *they?* What's the use of having a skull for a money-box if it's got no money in it? That's what *I* want to know, Tom!"

"Here's a young gentleman," said Tom, "as I've done all these things for, and how does he treat me? He says, 'Why Tom, you know you're drunk, you silly old fool.' "

At this pathetic appeal the little girl sprang up and turned towards me with the ferocity of a young tigress. Her little hands were tightly clenched, and her eyes seemed positively to be emitting blue sparks. Many a bold boy had I encountered on the sands before my accident, and many a fearless girl, but such an impetuous antagonist as this was

new. I leaned on my crutches, however, and looked at her unblenchingly.

"You wicked English boy, to make my father cry," said she, as soon as her anger allowed her to speak. "If you were not lame I'd—I'd—I'd hit you."

I did not move a muscle, but stood lost in a dream of wonder at her amazing loveliness. The fiery flush upon her face and neck, the bewitching childish frown of anger corrugating the brow, the dazzling glitter of the teeth, the quiver of the full scarlet lips above and below them, turned me dizzy with admiration.

Her eyes met mine, and slowly the violet flames in them began to soften. Then they died away entirely as she murmured:

"You wicked English boy, if you hadn't—beautiful—beautiful eyes, I'd kill you."

By this time, however, Tom had entirely forgotten his grievance against me, and gazed upon Winifred in a state of drunken wonderment.

"Winifred," he said, in a tone of sorrowful reproach, "how dare you speak like that to Master Aylwin, your father's best friend, the only friend your poor father's got in the world, the friend as I give ferret-eyed rabbits to, and tame hares, and beautiful skulls? Beg his pardon this instant, Winifred. Down on your knees and beg my friend's pardon this instant, Winifred."

The poor little girl stood dazed, and was actually sinking down on her knees on the grass before me.

I cried out in acute distress:

"No, no, no, no, Tom, pray don't let her—dear little girl! beautiful little girl!"

"Very well, Master Aylwin," said Tom, grandly, "she sha'n't if you don't like, but she *shall* go and kiss you and make it up."

At this the child's face brightened, and she came and laid her little red lips upon mine. Velvet lips, I feel them now, soft and warm—I feel them while I write these lines.

Tom looked on for a moment, and then left us, blundering away towards Raxton, most likely to a beer-house.

He told the child that she was to go home and mind the house until he returned. He gave her the church key to take home. We two were left alone in the churchyard, looking at each other in silence, each waiting for the other to

speak. At last she said, demurely, "Good-bye; father says I must go home."

And she walked away with a business-like air toward the little white gate of the churchyard, opening upon what was called "The Wilderness Road." When she reached the gate she threw a look over her shoulder as she passed through. It was that same look again—wistful, frank, courageous. I immediately began to follow her, although I did not know why. When she saw this she stopped for me. I got up to her, and then we proceeded side by side in perfect silence along the dusty narrow road, perfumed with the scent of wild rose and honeysuckle. Suddenly she stopped and said:

"I have left my hat on the tower," and laughed merrily at her own heedlessness.

She ran back with an agility which I thought I had never seen equalled. It made me sad to see her run so fast, though once how it would have delighted me! I stood still; but when she reached the church porch she again looked over her shoulder, and again I followed her:—I did not in the least know why. That look I think would have made me follow her through fire and water—it *has* made me follow her through fire and water. When I reached her she put the great black key in the lock. She had some difficulty in turning the key, but I did not presume to offer such services as mine to so superior a little woman. After one or two fruitless efforts with both her hands, each attempt accompanied with a little laugh and a little merry glance in my face, she turned the key and pushed open the door. We both passed into the ghastly old church, through the green glass windows of which the sun was shining, and illuminating the broken remains of the high-backed pews on the opposite side. She ran along towards the belfry, and I soon lost her, for she passed up the stone steps, where I knew I could not follow her.

In deep mortification I stood listening at the bottom of the steps—listening to those little feet crunching up the broken stones—listening to the rustle of her dress against the narrow stone walls, until the sounds grew fainter and fainter, and then ceased.

Presently I heard her voice a long way up, calling out, "Little boy, if you go outside you will see something." I guessed at once that she was going to exhibit herself on the tower, where, before my accident, I and my brother Frank

were so fond of going. I went outside the church and stood in the graveyard, looking up at the tower. In a minute I saw her on it. Her face was turned towards me, gilded by the golden sunshine. I could, or thought I could, even at that distance, see the flash of the bright eyes looking at me. Then a little hand was put over the parapet, and I saw a dark hat swinging by its strings, as she was waving it to me. Oh! that I could have climbed those steps and done that! But that exploit of hers touched a strange chord within me. Had she been a boy, I could have borne it in a defiant way; or had she been any other girl than this, my heart would not have sunk as it now did when I thought of the gulf between her and me. Down I sat upon a grave, and looked at her with a feeling quite new to me.

This was a phase of cripplehood I had not contemplated. She soon left the tower, and made her appearance at the church door again. After locking it, which she did by thrusting a piece of stick through the handle of the key, she came and stood over me. But I turned my eyes away and gazed across the sea, and tried to deceive myself into believing that the waves, and the gulls, and the sails dreaming on the sky-line, and the curling clouds of smoke that came now and then from a steamer passing Dullingham Point were interesting me deeply. There was a remoteness about the little girl now, since I had seen her unusual agility, and I was trying to harden my heart against her. Loneliness I felt was best for me. She did not speak, but stood looking at me. I turned my eyes round and saw that she was looking at my crutches, which were lying beside me aslant the green hillock where I sat. Her face had turned grave and pitiful.

"Oh! I forgot," she said. "I wish I had not run away from you now."

"You may run where you like for what I care," I said. But the words were very shaky and I had no sooner said them than I wished them back. She made no reply for some time, and I sat plucking the wild flowers near my hands, and gazing again across the sea. At last she said:

"Would you like to come in our garden? It's such a nice garden."

I could resist her no longer. That voice would have drawn me had she spoken in the language of the Toltecs or the lost Zamzummin. To describe it would of course be impossible.

The novelty of her accent, the way in which she gave the "h" in "which," "what," and "when," the Welsh rhythm of her intonation, were as bewitching to me as the *timbre* of her voice. And let me say here, once for all, that when I sat down to write this narrative, I determined to give the English reader some idea of the way in which, whenever her emotions were deeply touched, her talk would run into soft Welsh diminutives; but I soon abandoned the attempt in despair. I found that to use colloquial Welsh with effect in an English context is impossible without wearying English readers and disappointing Welsh ones.

Here, indeed, is one of the great disadvantages under which this book will go out to the world. While a story-teller may reproduce by means of orthographical devices, something of the effect of Scottish accent, Irish accent, or Manx accent, such devices are powerless to represent Welsh accent.

I got up in silence, and walked by her side out of the churchyard towards her father's cottage, which was situated between the new church and the old, and at a considerable distance from the town of Raxton on one side, and the village of Graylingham on the other. Her eager young limbs would every moment take her ahead of me, for she was as vigorous as a fawn. But by the time she was half a yard in advance, she would recollect herself and fall back; and every time she did so that same look of tenderness would overspread her face.

At last she said, "What makes you stare at me so, little boy?"

I blushed and turned my head another way, for I had been feasting my eyes upon her complexion, and trying to satisfy myself as to what it really was like. Indeed, I thought it quite peculiar then, when I had seen so few lovely faces, as I always did afterwards, when I had seen as many as most people. It was, I thought, as though underneath the sunburn the delicate pink tint of the hedgerose had become mingled with the bloom of a ripening peach, and yet it was like neither peach nor rose. But this tone, whatever it was, did not spread higher than the eyebrows. The forehead was different. It had a singular kind of pearly look, and her long slender throat was almost of the same tone: no, not the same, for there was a transparency about her throat unlike that of the forehead. This colour I was just now thinking

looked something like the inside of a certain mysterious shell upon my father's library shelf.

As she asked me her question she stopped, and looked straight at me, opening her eyes wide and round upon me. This threw a look of innocent trustfulness over her bright features which I soon learnt was the chief characteristic of her expression and was altogether peculiar to herself. I knew it was very rude to stare at people as I had been staring at her, and I took her question as a rebuke, although I still was unable to keep my eyes off her. But it was not merely her beauty and her tenderness that had absorbed my attention. I had been noticing how intensely she seemed to enjoy the delights of that summer afternoon. As we passed along that road, where sea-scents and land-scents were mingled, she would stop whenever the sunshine fell full upon her face; her eyes would sparkle and widen with pleasure, and a half-smile would play about her lips, as if some one had kissed her. Every now and then she would stop and listen to the birds, putting up her finger, and with a look of childish wisdom say, "Do you know what that is? That's a blackbird—that's a thrush—that's a goldfinch. Which eggs do you like best—a goldfinch's or a bullfinch's? *I* know which *I* like best."

## III.

While we were walking along the road a sound fell upon my ears which in my hale days never produced any very unpleasant sensations, but which did now. I mean the cackling of the field people of both sexes returning from their day's work. These people knew me well, and they liked me, and I am sure they had no idea that when they ran past me on the road their looks and nods gave me no pleasure, but pain; and I always tried to avoid them. As they passed us they somewhat modified the noise they were making, but only to cackle, chatter and bawl and laugh at each other the louder after we were left behind.

"Don't you wish," said the little girl meditatively, "that men and women had voices more like the birds?"

The idea had never occurred to me before, but I understood in a moment what she meant, and sympathised with

her. Nature of course had been unkind to the lords and ladies of creation in this one matter of voice.

"Yes, I do," I said.

"I'm so glad you do," said she. "I've so often thought what a pity it is that God did not let men and women talk and sing as the birds do. I believe He did let 'em talk like that in the Garden of Eden, don't you?"

"I think it very likely," I said.

"Men's voices are so rough mostly and women's voices are so sharp mostly, that it's sometimes a little hard to love 'em as you love the birds."

"It is," I said.

"Don't you think the poor birds must sometimes feel very much distressed at hearing the voices of men and women, especially when they all talk together?"

The idea seemed so original and yet so true that it made me laugh; we both laughed. At that moment there came a still louder, noisier clamour of voices from the villagers.

"The rooks mayn't mind," said the little girl, pointing upwards to the large rookery close by, whence came a noise marvellously like that made by the field-workers. "But I'm afraid the blackbirds and thrushes can't like it. I do so wonder what they say about it."

After we had left the rookery behind us and the noise of the villagers had grown fainter, we stood and listened to the blackbirds and thrushes. She looked so joyous that I could not help saying, "Little girl, I think you're very happy, ain't you?"

"Not quite," she said, as though answering a question she had just been putting to herself. "There's not enough wind."

"Then do *you* like the wind?" I said in surprise and delight.

"Oh, I love it!" she said rapturously. "I can't be quite happy without it, can *you?* I like to run up the hills in the wind and sing to it. That's when I'm happiest. I couldn't live long without the wind."

Now it had been a deep-rooted conviction of mine that none but the gulls and I really and truly liked the wind. "Fishermen are muffs," I used to say; "they talk about the wind as though it were an enemy, just because it drowns one or two of 'em now and then. Anybody can like sunshine; muffs can like sunshine; it takes a gull or a man to like the wind!"

Such had been my egotism. But here was a girl who liked it! We reached the gate of the garden in front of Tom's cottage, and then we both stopped, looking over the neatly-kept flower-garden and the white thatched cottage behind it, up the walls of which the grape-vine leaves were absorbing the brilliance of the sunlight and softening it. Wynne was a gardener as well as an organist, and had gardens both in the front and at the back of his cottage, which was surrounded by fruit-trees. Drunkard as he was, his two passions, music and gardening, saved him from absolute degradation and ruin. His garden was beautifully kept, and I have seen him deftly pruning his vines when in such a state of drink that it was wonderful how he managed to hold a pruning-knife. Winifred opened the gate, and we passed in. Wynne's little terrier, Snap, came barking to meet us.

There was an air of delicious peacefulness about the garden. This also tended to soften that hardness of temper which only cripples who have once rejoiced in their strength can possibly know, I hope.

"I like to see you look so," said the little girl, as I melted entirely under these sweet influences. "You looked so cross before that I was nearly afraid of you."

And she took hold of my hand, not hesitatingly, but frankly. The little fingers clasped mine. I looked at them. They were much more sun-tanned than her face. The little rosy nails were shaped like filbert nuts.

"Why were you not *quite* afraid of me?" I asked.

"Because," said she, "under the crossness I saw that you had great love-eyes like Snap's all the while. *I* saw it!" she said, and laughed with delight at her great wisdom. Then she said with a sudden gravity, "You didn't mean to make my father cry, did you, little boy?"

"No," I said.

"And you love him?" said she.

I hesitated, for I had never told a lie in my life. My business relations with Tom had been of an entirely unsatisfactory character, and the idea of any one's loving the beery scamp presented itself in a ludicrous light. I got out of the difficulty by saying:

"I mean to love Tom very much, if I can."

The answer did not appear to be entirely satisfactory to the little girl, but it soon seemed to pass from her mind.

That was the most delightful afternoon I had ever spent

in my life. We seemed to become old friends in a few minutes, and in an hour or two she was the closest friend I had on earth. Not all the little shoeless friends in Raxton, not all the beautiful sea-gulls I loved, not all the sunshine and wind upon the sands, not all the wild bees in Graylingham Wilderness, could give the companionship this child could give. My flesh tingled with delight. (And yet all the while I was not Hal the conqueror of ragamuffins, but Hal the cripple!)

"Shall we go and get some strawberries?" she said, as we passed to the back of the house. "They are quite ripe."

But my countenance fell at this. I was obliged to tell her that I could not stoop.

"Ah! but *I* can, and I will pluck them and give them to you. I should like to do it. *Do* let me, there's a good boy."

I consented, and hobbled by her side to the verge of the strawberry-beds. But when I foolishly tried to follow her, I stuck ignominiously, with my crutches sunk deep in the soft mould of rotten leaves. Here was a trial for the conquering hero of the coast. I looked into her face to see if there was not, at last, a laugh upon it. That cruel human laugh was my only dread. To everything but ridicule I had hardened myself; but against that I felt helpless.

I looked into her face to see if she was laughing at my lameness. No: her brows were merely knit with anxiety as to how she might best relieve me. This surpassingly beautiful child, then, had evidently accepted me—lameness and all—crutches and all—as a subject of peculiar interest.

How I loved her as I put my hand upon her firm little shoulders, while I extricated first one crutch and then another, and at last got upon the hard path again!

When she had landed me safely, she returned to the strawberry-bed, and began busily gathering the fruit, which she brought to me in her sunburnt hands, stained to a bright pink by the ripe fruit. Such a charm did she throw over me, that at last I actually consented to her putting the fruit into my mouth.

She then told me with much gravity that she knew how to "cure crutches." There was, she said, a famous "crutches-well" in Wales, kept by St. Winifred (most likely an aunt of hers, being of the same name), whose water could "cure crutches." When she came from Wales again she would "be sure to bring a bottle of 'crutches-water.'" She told

me also much about Snowdon (near which she lived), and how, on misty days, she used to "make believe that she was the Lady of the Mist, and that she was going to visit the Tywysog o'r Niwl, the Prince of the Mist; it was *so* nice!"

I do not know how long we kept at this, but the organist returned and caught her in the very act of feeding me. To be caught in this ridiculous position, even by a drunken man, was more than I could bear, however, and I turned and left.

As I recall that walk home along Wilderness Road, I live it as thoroughly as I did then. I can see the rim of the sinking sun burning fiery red low down between the trees on the left, and then suddenly dropping out of sight. I can see on the right the lustre of the high-tide sea. I can hear the "che-eu-chew, che-eu-chew," of the wood-pigeons in Graylingham Wood. I can smell the very scent of the bean flowers drinking in the evening dews. I did not feel that I was going home as the sharp gables of the Hall gleamed through the chestnut-trees. My home for evermore was the breast of that lovely child, between whom and myself such a strange delicious sympathy had sprung up. I felt there was no other home for me.

"Why, child, where *have* you been?" said my mother, as she saw me trying to slip to bed unobserved, in order that happiness such as mine might not be brought into coarse contact with servants. "Child, where *have* you been, and what has possessed you? Your face is positively shining with joy, and your eyes, they alarm me, they are so unnaturally bright. I hope you are not going to have an illness."

I did not tell her, but went to my room, which now was on the ground floor, and sat watching the rooks sailing home in the sunset till the last one had gone, and the voices of the blackbirds grew less clamorous, and the trees began to look larger and larger in the dusk.

## IV.

The next day I was again at Wynne's cottage, and the next, and the next. We two, Winifred and I, used to stroll out together through the narrow green lanes, and over the happy fields, and about the Wilderness and the wood, and along the cliffs, and then down the gangway at Flinty Point

(the only gangway that was firm enough to support my crutches, Winifred aiding me with the skill of a woman and the agility of a child), and then along the flints below Flinty Point. She rapidly fell into my habits. She was an adept in finding birds' nests and wild honey; and though she would not consent to my taking the eggs, she had not the same compunction about the honey, and she only regretted with me that we could not be exactly like St. John, as Graylingham Wilderness yielded no locusts to eat with the honey. Winifred, though the most healthy of children, had a passion for the deserted church on the cliffs, and for the desolate churchyard.

It was one of those flint and freestone churches that are sprinkled along the coast. Situated as it was at the back of a curve cut by the water into the end of a peninsula running far into the sea, the tower looked in the distance like a lighthouse. I observed after the first day of our meeting that Winifred never would mount the tower steps again. And I knew why. So delicate were her feelings, so acute did her kind little heart make her, that she would not mount steps which I could never mount.

Not that Winifred looked upon me as her little lover. There was not much of the sentimental in her. Once when I asked her on the sands if I might be her lover, she took an entirely practical view of the question, and promptly replied "Certumly," adding, however, like the wise little woman I always found her, that she "wasn't *quite* sure she knew what a lover was, but if it was anything *very* nice she should certumly like *me* to be it."

It was the child's originality of manner that people found so captivating. One of her many little tricks and ways of an original quaintness was her habit of speaking of herself in the third person, like the merest baby. "Winifred likes this," "Winifred doesn't like that," were phrases that had an irresistible fascination for me.

Another fascinating characteristic of hers was connected with her superstitions. Whenever on parting with her I exclaimed, as I often did, "Oh, what a lovely day we have had, Winifred!" she would look expectantly into my eyes, murmuring, "And—and——" This meant that I was to say, "And shall have many more such days," as though there were a prophetic power in words.

She talked with entire seriousness of having seen in a

place called Fairy Glen in Wales the Tylwyth Teg. And when I told her of Oberon and Titania, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, whose acquaintance I had made through Lamb's *Tales from Shakspeare*, she said that one bright moonlight night she, in the company of two of her Gypsy playmates, Rhona Boswell and a girl called Sinfi, had visited this same Fairy Glen, when they saw the Fairy Queen alone on a ledge of rock, dressed in a green kirtle with a wreath of golden leaves about her head.

Another subject upon which I loved to hear her talk was that of the "Knockers" of Snowdon, the guardians of undiscovered copper mines, who sometimes by knocking on the rocks gave notice to individuals they favoured of undiscovered copper, but these favoured ones were mostly children who chanced to wander up Snowdon by themselves. She had, she said, not only heard but seen these Knockers. They were thick-set dwarfs, as broad as they were long. One Knocker, an elderly female, had often played with her on the hills. Knockers' Llyn, indeed, was very much on Winifred's mind. When a golden cloud, like the one to which she was singing her song at the time I first saw her, shone over a person's head at Knockers' Llyn, it was a sign of good fortune. She was sure that it was so, because the Welsh people believed it, and so did the Gypsies.

Not a field or a hedgerow was unfamiliar to us. We were most learned in the structure of birds' nests, in the various colours of birds' eggs, and in insect architecture. In all the habits of the wild animals of the meadows we were most profound little naturalists.

Winifred could in the morning, after the dews were gone, tell by the look of a buttercup or a daisy what kind of weather was at hand, when the most cunning peasant was deceived by the hieroglyphics of the sky, and the most knowing seaman could "make nothing of the wind."

Her life, in fact, had been spent in the open air.

There were people staying at the Hall, and they and Frank engrossed all my mother's attention. At least, she did not appear to notice my absence from home.

My brother Frank, however, was not so unobservant (he was two years older than myself). Early one morning, before breakfast, curiosity led him to follow me, and he came upon us in Graylingham Wood as we were sitting under a

tree close to the cliff, eating the wild honey we had found in the Wilderness.

He stood there swinging a ground-ash cane, and looking at her in a lordly patronising way, the very personification no doubt of boyish beauty. I became troubled to see him look so handsome. The contrast between him and a cripple was not fair, I thought, as I observed an expression of passing admiration on little Winifred's face. Yet I thought there was not the pleased smile with which she had first greeted me, and a weight of anxiety was partially removed, for it had now become quite evident to me that I was as much in love as any swain of eighteen—it had become quite evident that without Winifred the poor little shattered sea-gull must perish altogether. She was literally my world.

Frank came and sat down with us, and made himself as agreeable as possible. He tried to enter into our play, but we were too slow for him; he soon became restless and impatient. "Oh bother!" he said, and got up and left us.

I drew a sigh of relief when he was gone.

"Do you like my brother, Winifred?" I said.

"Yes," she said.

"Why?"

"Because he is so pretty and so nimble. I believe he could run up——" and then she stopped; but I knew what the complete sentence would have been. She was going to say: "I believe he could run up the gangways without stopping to take breath."

Here was a stab; but she did not notice the effect of her unfinished sentence. Then a question came from me involuntarily.

"Winifred," I said, "do you like him as well as you like me?"

"Oh no," she said, in a tone of wonderment that such a question should be asked.

"But *I* am not pretty and——"

"Oh, but you *are!*" she said eagerly, interrupting me.

"But," I said, with a choking sensation in my voice, "I am lame," and I looked at the crutches lying among the ferns beside me.

"Ah, but I like you all the better for being lame," she said, nestling up to me.

"But you like nimble boys," I said, "such as Frank."

She looked puzzled. The anomaly of liking nimble boys

and crippled boys at the same time seemed to strike her. Yet she felt it *was* so, though it was difficult to explain it.

"Yes, I *do* like nimble boys," she said at last, plucking with her fingers at a blade of grass she held between her teeth. "But I think I like lame boys better, that is if they are—if they are—*you*."

I gave an exclamation of delight. But she was two years younger than I, and scarcely, I suppose, understood it.

"He is very pretty," she said meditatively, "but he has not got love-eyes like you and Snap, and I don't think I could love any little boy so very, *very* much now who wasn't lame."

She loved me in spite of my lameness; she loved me because I was lame, so that if I had not fallen from the cliffs, if I had sustained my glorious position among the boys of Raxton and Graylingham as "Fighting Hal," I might never have won little Winifred's love. Here was a revelation of the mingled yarn of life, that I remember struck me even at that childish age.

I began to think I might, in spite of the undoubted crutches, resume my old place as the luckiest boy along the sands. She loved me because I was lame! Those who say that physical infirmity does not feminise the character have not had my experience. No more talk for me that morning. In such a mood as that there can be no talk. I sat in a silent dream, save when a sweet sob of delight would come up like a bubble from the heaving waters of my soul. I had passed into that rare and high mood when life's afflictions are turned by love to life's deepest, holiest joys. I had begun early to learn and know the gamut of the affections.

"When you leave me here and go home to Wales you will never forget me, Winnie?"

"Never, never!" she said, as she helped me from the ferns which were still as wet with dew as though it had been raining. "I will think of you every night before I go to sleep, and always end my prayers as I did that first night after I saw you so lonely in the churchyard."

"And how is that, Winnie?" I said, as she adjusted my crutches for me.

"After I've said 'Amen,' I always say, 'And, dear Lord Jesus, don't forget to love dear Henry, who can't get up the gangways without me,' and I will say that every night as long as I live."

From that morning I considered her altogether mine. Her speaking of me as the "dear little English boy," however, as she did, marred the delight her words gave me. I had from the first observed that the child's strongest passion was a patriotism of a somewhat fiery kind. The word English in her mouth seemed sometimes a word of reproach: it was the name of the race that in the past had invaded her sacred Snowdonia.

I afterwards learnt that her aunt was answerable for this senseless prejudice.

"Winnie," I said, "don't you wish I was a Welsh boy?"

"Oh, yes," she said. "Don't you?"

I made no answer.

She looked into my face and said, "And yet I don't think I could love a Welsh boy as I love you."

She then repeated to me a verse of a Welsh song, which of course I did not understand a word of until she told me what it meant in English.

It was an address to Snowdon, and ran something like this—

> "Mountain-wild Snowdon for me!
> Sweet silence there for the harp,
> Where loiter the ewes and the lambs
> In the moss and the rushes,
> Where one's song goes sounding up!
> And the rocks re-echo it higher and higher,
> In the height where the eagles live."

In this manner about six weeks slid away, and Winnie's visit to her father came to an end. I ask, how can people laugh at the sorrows of childhood? The bitterness of my misery as I sat with that child on the eve of her departure for Wales (which to me seemed at the extreme end of the earth) was almost on a par with anything I have since suffered, and that is indeed saying a great deal. It was in Wynne's cottage, and I sat on the floor with her wet cheeks close to mine, saying, "She leaves me alone." Tom tried to console me by telling me that Winifred would soon come back.

"But when?" I said.

"Next year," said Tom.

He might as well have said next century, for any consolation it gave me. The idea of a year without her was altogether beyond my grasp. It seemed infinite.

Week after week passed, and month after month, and little Winifred was always in my thoughts. Wynne's cottage was a sacred spot to me, and the organist the most interesting man in the world. I never tired of asking him questions about her, though he, as I soon found, knew scarcely anything concerning her and what she was doing, and cared less; for love of drink had got thoroughly hold of him.

Letters were scarce visitants to him, and I believe he never used to hear from Wales at all.

## V.

At the end of the year she came again, and I had about a year of happiness. I was with her every day, and every day she grew more necessary to my existence.

It was at this time that I made the acquaintance of Winnie's friend Rhona Boswell, a charming little Gypsy girl. Graylingham Wood and Rington Wood, like the entire neighbourhood, were favourite haunts of a superior kind of Gypsies called Griengroes, that is to say, horse-dealers. Their business was to buy ponies in Wales and sell them in the Eastern Counties and the East Midlands. Thus it was that Winnie had known many of the East Midland Gypsies in Wales. Compared with Rhona Boswell, who was more like a fairy than a child, Winnie seemed quite a grave little person. Rhona's limbs were always on the move, and the movement sprang always from her emotions. Her laugh seemed to ring through the woods like silver bells, a sound that it was impossible to mistake for any other. The laughter of most Gypsy girls is full of music and of charm, and yet Rhona's laughter was a sound by itself, and it was no doubt this which afterwards when she grew up attracted my kinsman, Percy Aylwin, towards her. It seemed to emanate not from her throat merely, but from her entire frame. If one could imagine a strain of merriment and fun blending with the ecstatic notes of a skylark soaring and singing, one might form some idea of the laugh of Rhona Boswell. Ah, what days they were! Rhona would come from Gypsy Dell, a romantic place in Rington Manor some miles off, especially

to show us some newly devised coronet of flowers that she had been weaving for herself. This induced Winnie to weave for herself a coronet of sea-weeds, and an entire morning was passed in grave discussion as to which coronet excelled the other.

A year had made a great difference in Winnie, a much greater difference than it had made in me. Her aunt, who was no doubt a well-informed woman, had been attending to her education. In a single year she had taught her French so thoroughly that Winnie was in the midst of Dumas's *Monte Cristo*. And apart from education in the ordinary acceptation of the word, the expansion of her mind had been rapid and great.

Her English vocabulary was now far above mine, far above that of most children of her age. This I discovered was owing to the fact that a literary English lady of delicate health, Miss Dalrymple, whose slender means obliged her to leave the Capel Curig Hotel, had been staying at the cottage as a lodger. She had taken the greatest delight in educating Winnie. Of course Winnie lost as well as gained by this change. She was a little Welsh rustic no longer, but a little lady unusually well equipped, as far as education went, for taking her place in the world.

She understood fully now what I meant when I told her that we were betrothed, and again showed that mingling of child-wisdom and poetry which characterised her by suggesting that we should be married on Snowdon, and that her wedding-dress should be the green kirtle and wreath of the fairies, and that her bridesmaids should be her Gypsy friends, Sinfi Lovell and Rhona Boswell. This I acceded to with alacrity.

It was now that I fully realised for the first time her extraordinary gift of observation and her power of describing what she had observed in the graphic language that can never be taught save by the teacher Nature herself. In a dozen picturesque words she would flash upon my very senses the scene that she was describing. So vividly did she bring before my eyes the scenery of North Wales, that when at last I went there it seemed quite familiar to me. And so in describing individuals, her pictures of them were like photographs.

Graylingham Wood was our favourite haunt. This place and the adjoining piece of waste land, called the Wilderness,

had for us all the charms of a primeval forest. Here in the early spring we used to come and watch the first violet uplifting its head from the dark green leaves behind the mossy boles, and listen for the first note of the blackcap, the nightingale's herald, and the first *coo* of the wood-pigeons among the bare and newly-budding trees. And here, in the summer, we used to come as soon as breakfast was over with as many story-books as we could carry, and sit on the grass and revel in the wonders of the *Arabian Nights*, the *Tales of the Genii*, and the *Seven Champions of Christendom*, till all the leafy alleys of the woods were glittering with armed knights and Sindbads and Aladdins. The story of Camaralzaman and Badoura was, I think, Winnie's chief favourite. She could repeat it almost word for word. The idea of the two lovers being carried to each other by genii through the air and over the mountain tops had an especial fascination for her. I was Camaralzaman and she Badoura, and the genii would carry me to her as she sat by Knockers' Llyn, or, as she called it, Llyn Coblynau, on the lower slopes of Snowdon.

But above all, there was the sea on the other side of the wood, of the presence of which we were always conscious—the sea, of which we could often catch glimpses between the trees, lending a sense of freedom and wonder and romance such as no landscape can lend. Our great difficulty of course was in connection with my lameness. Few children would have tried to convey a pair of crutches and a lame leg down the cliff to the long, level, brown sands that lay, farther than the eye could reach, stretched beneath miles on miles of brown crumbling cliffs, whose jagged points and indentations had the kind of spectral look peculiar to that coast. For, alas! the holy water Winifred brought did not "cure the crutches." Yet we used to master the difficulty, always selecting the firmer gangway at Flinty Point, and always waiting, before making the attempt, until there was no one near to see us toiling down. Once down on the hard sands just below the Point, we were happy, paddling and enjoying ourselves till the sunset told us that we must begin our herculean labour of hoisting the leg and crutches up the gangway back to the wood. I have performed many athletic feats since my cure, but nothing comparable to the feat of climbing with crutches up those paths of yielding sand. To myself, now, it seems almost incredible that it was ever

achieved, nor could it have been done without the aid of so active and courageous a friend as Winifred.

We knew Nature in all her moods. In every aspect we found the sea, the wood, and the meadows, happy and beautiful—in winter as in summer, in storm as in sunshine. In the foggy days of November, in the sharp winds of March, in the snows and sleet and rain of February, we used to hear other people complain of the bad weather; we used to hear them fret for change. But we despised them for their ignorance where we were so learned. There was no bad weather for us. In March, what so delicious as breasting together the brave wind, and feeling it tingle our cheeks and beat our ears till we laughed at each other with joy? In rain, what so delicious as to stand under a tree or behind a hedge and listen to the drops pattering overhead among the leaves, and see the fields steaming up to meet them? Then again the soft falling of snow upon the lonely fields, while the very sheep looked brown against the whiteness gathering round them. All beautiful to us two, and beloved!

## VI.

"But where was this little boy's mother all this time?" you naturally ask; "where was his father? In a word, who was he? and what were his surroundings?"

I will answer these queries in as brief a fashion as possible.

My father, Philip Aylwin, belonged to a branch of an ancient family which had been satirically named by another branch of the same family "The Proud Aylwins."

It is a singular thing that it was the proud Aylwins who had a considerable strain of Gypsy blood in their veins. My great-grandfather had married Fenella Stanley, the famous Gypsy beauty, about whom so much was written in the newspapers and magazines of that period, and whose portrait in the character of the Sibyl of Snowdon was painted by the great portrait painter of that time.

This picture still hangs in the portrait gallery of Raxton Hall.

As a child it had an immense attraction for me, and no wonder, for it was original to actual eccentricity. It de-

picted a dark young woman of dazzling beauty standing at break of day among mountain scenery, holding a musical instrument of the guitar kind, but shaped like a violin, upon the lower strings of which she was playing with the thumb of the left hand.

Through the misty air were seen all kinds of shadowy shapes, whose eyes were fixed on the player. I used to stand and look at this picture by the hour together, fascinated by the strange beauty of the singer's face and the mysterious, prophetic expression of the eyes.

And I used to try to imagine what tune it was that could call from the mountain air the "flower sprites" and "sunshine elves" of morning on the mountain.

Fenella Stanley seems in her later life to have set up as a positive seeress, and I infer from certain family papers and diaries in my possession that she was the very embodiment of the wildest Romany beliefs and superstitions.

I first became conscious of the mysterious links which bound me to my Gypsy ancestress by reading one of her letters to my great-grandfather, who had taught her to write: nothing apparently could have taught her to spell. It was written during a short stay she was making away from him in North Wales. It described in the simplest (and often the most uncouth) words that Nature-ecstasy which the Romanies seem to feel in the woodlands. It came upon me like a revelation, for it was the first time I had ever seen embodied in words the sensations which used to come to me in the Graylingham Wood or on the river that ran through it. After long basking among the cowslips, or beneath the whispering branches of an elm, whose shade I was robbing from the staring cows around, or lying on my back in a boat on the river, listening to the birds and the insect hum and all the magic music of summer in the woodlands, I used all at once to feel as though the hand of a great enchantress were being waved before me and around me. The wheels of thought would stop; all the senses would melt into one, and I would float on a tide of unspeakable joy, a tide whose waves were waves neither of colour, nor perfume, nor melody, but new waters born of the mixing of these; and, through a language deeper than words and deeper than thoughts, I would seem carried at last close to an actual consciousness—a consciousness which, to my childish dreams, seemed drawing me close to the bosom of a mother

whose face would brighten into that of Fenella. My father lived upon moderate means in the little seaside town of Raxton. My mother was his second wife, a distant cousin of the same name. She was not one of the "Proud Aylwins," and yet she must have had more pride in her heart than all the "Proud Aylwins" put together. Her feeling in relation to the strain of Gypsy blood in the family into which she had married was that of positive terror. She associated the word "Gypsy" with everything that is wild, passionate and lawless.

One great cause undoubtedly of her partiality for Frank and her dislike of me was that Frank's blue-eyed Saxon face showed no sign whatever of the Romany strain, while my swarthy face did.

As I write this, she lives before me with more vividness than my father, for the reason that her character during my childhood, before I came to know my father thoroughly—before I came to know what a marvellous man he was—seemed to be a thousand times more vivid than his. With her bright grey eyes, her patrician features, I shall see her while memory lasts. The only differences that ever arose between my father and my mother were connected with the fact that my father had had a former wife. Now and then (not often) my mother would lose her stoical self-command, and there would come from her an explosion of jealous anger, stormy and terrible. This was on occasions when she perceived that my father's memory retained too vividly the impression left on it of his love for the wife who was dead—dead, but a rival still. My father lived in mortal fear of this jealousy. Yet my mother was a devoted and a fond wife. I remember in especial the flash that would come from her eyes, the fiery flush that would overspread her face, whenever she saw my father open a certain antique silver casket which he kept in his escritoire when at home, and carried about with him when travelling. The casket (I soon learned) contained mementoes of his first wife, between whom and himself there seems to have been a deep natural sympathy such as did not exist between my mother and him. This first wife he had lost under peculiarly painful circumstances, which it is necessary that I should briefly narrate. She had been drowned before his very eyes in that cove beneath the church which I have already described.

The semicircular indentation at the end of the peninsula

or headland on which the church stood was specially dangerous in two ways. It was a fatal spot where sea and land were equally treacherous. On the sands the tide, and on the cliffs the landslip, imperilled the lives of the unwary. Half, at least, of the churchyard had been condemned as "dangerous," and this very same spot was the only one on the coast where the pedestrian along the sands ran any serious risk of being entrapped by the tide; for the peninsula on which the church stood jutted out for a considerable distance into the sea, and then was scooped out in the form of a boot-jack, and so caught the full force of the waves. One corner, as already mentioned, was called Flinty Point, the other Needle Point, and between these two points there was no gangway within the semicircle up the wall of cliff. Indeed, within the cove the cliff was perpendicular, or rather overhanging, as far as such crumbling earth would admit of its overhanging. To reach a gangway, a person inside the cove would have to leave the cliff wall for the open sands, and pass round either Needle Point or Flinty Point. Hence the cove was sometimes called Mousetrap Cove, because when the tide reached so high as to touch these two points, a person on the sands within the cove was caught as in a mousetrap, and the only means of extrication was by boat from the sea. It was the irresistible action of the sea upon the peninsula (called Church Headland) that had doomed church and churchyard to certain destruction.

Dangerous as was this cove, there was something peculiarly fascinating about it. The black, smooth, undulating boulders that dotted the sand here and there formed the most delightful seats upon which to meditate or read. It was a favourite spot with my father's first wife, who had been a Swiss governess. She was a great reader and student, but it was not till after her death that my father became one. The poor lady was fond of bringing her books to the cove, and pursuing her studies or meditations with the sound of the sea's chime in her ears. My father, at that time I believe a simple, happy country squire, but showing strong signs of Romany ancestry, had often warned her of the risk she ran, and one day he had the agony of seeing her from the cliff locked in the cove, and drowning before his eyes ere a boat could be got, while he and the coastguard stood powerless to reach her.

The effect of this shock demented my father for a time.

How it was that he came to marry again I could never understand. During my childhood he had, as far as I could see, no real sympathy with anything save his own dreams. In after years I came to know the truth. He was kind enough in disposition, but he looked upon us, his children, as his second wife's property, his dreams as his own. Once every year he used to go to Switzerland and stay there for several weeks; and, as the object of these journeys was evidently to revisit the old spots made sacred to him by reminiscences of his romantic love for his first wife, it may be readily imagined that they were not looked upon with any favour by my mother. She never accompanied him on these occasions, nor would she let Frank do so—another proof of the early partiality she showed for my brother. As I was of less importance, my father (previous to my accident) used to take me, to my intense delight and enjoyment; but during the period of my lameness he went to Switzerland alone.

It was during one of my childish visits to Switzerland that I learnt an important fact in connection with my father and his first wife—the fact that since her death he had become a mystic and had joined a certain sect of mystics founded by Lavater.

This is how I came to know it. My attention had been arrested by a book lying on my father's writing-table—a large book called "*The Veiled Queen*, by Philip Aylwin"—and I began to read it. The statements therein were of an astounding kind, and the idea of a beautiful woman behind a veil completely fascinated my childish mind. And the book was full of the most amazing stories collected from all kinds of outlandish sources. One story, called "The Flying Donkey of the Ruby Hills," riveted my attention so much that it possessed me, and even now I feel that I can repeat every word of it. It was a story of a donkey-driver, who, having lost his wife Alawiyah, went and lived alone in the ruby hills of Badakhshan, where the Angel of Memory fashioned for him out of his own sorrow and tears an image of his wife. This image was mistaken by a townsman named Hasan for his own wife, and Ja'afar was summoned before the Ka'dee. Afterwards, when *The Veiled Queen* came into my possession, I noticed that this story was quoted for motto on the title-page:

"'Then,' quoth the Ka'dee, laughing until his grinders appeared, 'rather, by Allah, would I take all the punishment

thou dreadest, thou most false donkey-driver of the Ruby Hills, than believe this story of thine—this mad, mad story, that she with whom thou wast seen was not the living wife of Hasan here (as these four legal witnesses have sworn), but thine own dead spouse, Alawiyah, refashioned for thee by the Angel of Memory out of thine own sorrow and unquenchable fountain of tears.'

"Quoth Ja'afar, bowing low his head: 'Bold is the donkey-driver, O Ka'dee! and bold the ka'dee who dares say what he will believe, what disbelieve—not knowing in any wise the mind of Allah—not knowing in any wise his own heart and what it shall some day suffer.' "

This story so absorbed me that when my father re-entered the house I was perfectly unconscious of his presence. He took the book from me, saying it was not a book for children. It possessed my mind for some days. What I had read in it threw light upon certain conversations in French and German which I had heard between my father and his Swiss friends, and the fact gradually dawned upon me that he believed himself to be in direct communication with the spirit of his dead wife. This so acted upon my imagination that I began to feel that she was actually alive, though invisible. I told Frank when we got home that we had another mother in Switzerland, and that our father went to Switzerland to see her.

Having at that time a passionate love for my mother (a love none the less passionate because somewhat coldly returned), I felt great anger against this resuscitated rival; but Frank only laughed and called me a stupid little fool.

Luckily Frank forgot my story in a minute, and it never reached my mother's ears.

Some years after this an odd incident occurred. The idea of a veiled lady had, as I say, fascinated me. One Raxton fair-day I induced Winnie to be photographed on the sands, wearing a crown of sea-flowers in imitation of Rhona Boswell's famous wild-flower coronet, and a necklace of seaweed, with Frank and another boy lifting from her head a long white veil of my mother's. My father accidentally saw this photograph and was so taken with it that he adorned the title-page of the third edition of *The Veiled Queen* with a small woodcut of it.

These vagaries of my father's had an influence upon my destiny of the most tragic, yet of the most fantastic kind.

He had the reputation, I believe, of being one of the most learned mystics of his time. He was a fair Hebrew scholar, and also had a knowledge of Sanscrit, Arabic, and Persian. His passion for philology was deep-rooted. He was a no less ardent numismatist. Moreover, he was deeply versed in amulet-lore. He wrote a treatise upon "amulets" and their inscriptions. All this was *after* the death of his first wife. He had a large collection of amulets, Gnostic gems and abraxas stones. That he really believed in the virtue of amulets will be pretty clearly seen as my narrative proceeds. Indeed the subject of amulets and love-tokens became a mania with him. After his death it was said that his collection of amulets, Egyptian, Gnostic, and other, was rarer, and his collection of St. Helena coins larger, than any other collection in England.

Though my mother did not know of the spiritualistic orgies in Switzerland, she knew that my father was a spiritualist. And this vexed her, not only because she conceived it to be visionary folly, but because it was "low." She knew that it led him to join a newly-formed band of Latter-Day mystics which had been organised at Raxton, but luckily she did not know that through them he believed himself to be holding communication with his first wife. The members of this body were tradespeople of the town, and I quite think that in my mother's eyes all tradespeople were low.

As to her indifference towards me,—that is easily explained. I was an incorrigible little bohemian by nature. She despaired of ever changing me. During several years this indifference distressed me, though it in no way diminished my affection for her. At last, however, I got accustomed to it and accepted it as inevitable. But the remarkable thing was that Frank's affection for his mother was of the most languid kind. He was an open-hearted boy, and never took advantage of my mother's favouritism. Thus I was left entirely to my own resources. My little love-idyl with Winifred was for a long time unknown to my mother, and no amount of ocular demonstration could have made it known (in such a dream was he) to my father.

On one occasion, however, my mother, having been struck by her beauty at church, told Wynne to bring her to the house, little thinking what she was doing. Accordingly, Winifred came one evening and charmed my mother,

charmed the entire household, by her grace of manner. My mother, upon whom what she called "style" made a far greater impression than anything else, pronounced her to be a perfect lady, and I heard her remark that she wondered how the child of such a scapegrace as Wynne could have been so reared.

Unfortunately I was not old enough to disguise the transports of delight that set my heart beating and my crippled limbs trembling as I saw Winifred gliding like a fairy about the house and gardens, and petted even by my proud and awful mother. My mother did not fail to notice this, and before long she had got from Frank the history of our little loves, and even of the "cripple water" from St. Winifred's Well. I partly heard what Frank was telling her, and I was the only one to notice the expression of displeasure that overspread her features. She did not, however, show it to the child, but she never invited her there again, and from that evening was much more vigilant over my movements, lest I should go to Wynne's cottage. I still, however, continued to meet Winifred in Graylingham Wood during her stay with her father; and at last, when she again left me, I felt desolate indeed.

I wrote her a letter, and took it to him to address. He was very fond of showing his penmanship, which was remarkably good. He had indeed been well educated, though from his beer-house associations he had entirely caught the rustic accent. I saw him address it, and took it myself to the post-office at Rington, where I was not so well known as at Raxton, but I never got any reply.

And who was Tom Wynne? Though the organist of the new church at Raxton, and custodian of the old deserted church on the cliffs, he was the local ne'er-do-well, drunkard, and scapegrace. He was, however, a well-connected man, reduced to his present position by drink. He had lived in Raxton until he returned to Wales, which was his birthplace—having obtained there some appointment the nature of which I never could understand. In Wales he had got married; and there his wife had died shortly after the birth of Winnie. It was no doubt through his intemperate habits that he lost his post in Wales. It was then that he again came to Raxton, leaving the child with his sister-in-law.

Raxton stands on that part of the coast where the landsprings most persistently disintegrate the hills and render

them helpless against the ravages of the sea. Perhaps even within the last few centuries the spot called Mousetrap Cove, scooped out of the peninsula on which the old church stands, was dry land. The old Raxton church at the end of this peninsula had, not many years since, to be deserted for a new one, lest it should some day carry its congregation with it when it slides, as it soon will slide, into the sea. But as none had dared to pull down the old church, a custodian had to be found who for a pittance would take charge of it and of the important monuments it contains. Such a custodian was found in Wynne, who lived in the cottage already described on the Wilderness Road. Along this road (which passed both the new church and the old) I was frequently journeying, and Wynne's tall, burly form and ruddy face were, even before I knew Winnie, a certain comfort to me.

He was said to be the last remnant of an old family that once owned much land in the neighbourhood, and he was still the recipient of a small pension. My father used to say that Wynne's family was even exceptionally good, that it laid claim to being descended from a still older Welsh family. But my mother scorned the idea, and always treated the organist as belonging to the lower classes. It was Wynne who had taught me swimming. It was really he, and not my groom, who had taught me how to ride a horse along the low-tide sands so as not to distress him or damage his feet.

It was about this time that my uncle Aylwin of Alvanley, my mother's brother, who had quarrelled with her, became reconciled to her, and came to Raxton. He at once recommended that a friend of his, a famous London surgeon, should be consulted about my lameness. I accordingly went with him to London to be placed under the treatment of the eminent man. Had this been done earlier, what a world of suffering might have been spared me! The man of science pronounced my ailment to be quite curable.

He performed an operation upon the leg, and after a long and careful course of treatment in town, advised that I should go to Margate for a long stay, and avail myself of that change of air. I went, accompanied by my mother and brother, and stayed there several months. My father used to come to see us once a month or so, stay for a week, and then go back.

As the surgeon had prophesied, I made such advance that

I was after a while able to walk with tolerable ease without my crutches, by the aid of a walking-stick; and as time went on, the tonic effect of Margate air, aiding the remedies prescribed by the surgeon, worked such a change in me that I was pronounced well, and the doctor said I might return home. I returned to Raxton a cripple no longer.

I returned cured, I say. But how entangled is this web of our life! How almost impossible is it that good should come unmixed with evil, or evil unmixed with good! At Margate, where the bracing air did more, I doubt not, towards my restoration to health than all the medicines,—at Margate my brother drank in his death-poison.

During the very last days of our stay he caught scarlet fever. In a fortnight he was dead. The shock to me was very severe. It laid my mother prostrate for months.

I was now by the death of Frank the representative of our branch of the family, and a little fellow of uncomfortable importance. My uncle Aylwin of Alvanley, being childless, was certain to leave me his large estates, for he had dropped entirely away from the Aylwins of Rington Manor, and also from the branch of the Aylwin family represented by my cousin Cyril.

II.

# The Moonlight Cross of the Gnostics

# II.—THE MOONLIGHT CROSS OF THE GNOSTICS

## I.

My mother had some prejudice against a public school, and I was sent to a large and important private one at Cambridge.

And so, with Winifred on my mind, I went one damp winter's morning to Dullingham, our nearest railway station, on my way to Cambridge.

As concerns my school-days I feel that all that will interest the reader is this: as I rode through mile upon mile of the flat, wide-stretching country, I made to myself a vow in connection with Winifred,—a vow that when I left school I would do a certain thing in relation to her, though Fate itself should say, "This thing shall not be done." I did not know then, as I know now, how weak is human will enmeshed in that web of Circumstance that has been a-weaving since the beginning of the world.

I left school without the slightest notion as to what my future course in life was to be. I was to take my rich uncle's property. That was understood now. And although my mother never talked of the matter, I could see in the pensive gaze she bent on me an ever-present consciousness of a future for me more golden still.

But now I formed a new intimacy, and one of a very singular kind—an intimacy with my father, who suddenly woke up to the fact that I was no longer a child. It occurred on my making some pertinent inquiries about a certain Gnostic amulet representing the Gorgon's head, a prize of which he had lately become the happy possessor. On his telling me that the Arabic word for amulet was *hamalet*, and that the word meant "that which is suspended," I said in a perfectly

thoughtless way that very likely one of the learned societies to which he belonged might be able to trace some connection between "hamalet" and the "Hamlet" of Shakspeare. These idle and ignorant words of mine fell, as I found, upon a mind ripe to receive them. He looked straight before him at the bust of Shakspeare on the bookshelves, as he always looked when his rudderless imagination was once well launched, and I heard him mutter, "Hamlet—the Amleth of Saxo-Grammaticus,—hamalet, 'that which is suspended.' The world, to Hamlet's metaphysical mind, *was* 'suspended' in the wide region of Nowhere—in an infinite ocean of Nothing. Why did I not think of this before? Strange that this child should hit upon it." Then looking at me as though he had just seen me for the first time in his life, he said, "How old are you, child?" "Eighteen, father," I said. "Eighteen *years?*" he asked. "Yes, father," I said with some pique. "Did you suppose I meant eighteen months?" "Only eighteen years," he muttered, "a mere baby, in short; and yet he has hit upon what we Shakspearians have been boggling over for many years—the symbolical meaning involved in Hamlet's name. Henry, I prophesy great things for you."

An intimacy was cemented between us at once. One of the results of this conversation was my father's elaborate paper, read before one of his societies, in which he maintained that Shakspeare's *Hamlet* was a metaphysical poem, the great central idea of which was involved in the name Hamlet, Amleth, or Hamalet—the idea that the universe, suspended in the wide region of Nowhere, lies, an amulet, upon the breast of the Great Latona,—a paper that was the basis of his reputation in "the higher criticism."

Shortly after this my father and I spent the autumn in various parts of Switzerland. One night, when we were sitting outside the chalet in the full light of the moon, I was the witness of a display of passion on the part of one whom I had always considered to be a dreamy book-worm—a passionless, eccentric mystic—that simply amazed me. A flickering tongue from the central fires suddenly breaking up through the soil of an English vegetable garden could hardly have been a more unexpected phenomenon to me than what occurred on that memorable night.

The incident I am going to relate showed me how rash it is to supppose that you have really fathomed the personality of any human creature. The mementoes of his first

wife, which accompanied him whithersoever he went, absorbed his attention in Switzerland, and especially in the little place where she was born, far more than they had done at home. He was forever peeping furtively into his escritoire to enjoy the sight of them, and then looking over his shoulder to see if he was being watched by my mother, though she was far away in Raxton Hall. On the night in question he showed me the silver casket containing certain of these mementoes—mementoes which I felt to be almost too intimate to be shown even to his son.

"And now, Henry," said he, "I am going to show you something that no one else has ever seen since she died—the most sacred possession I have upon this earth." He then opened his shirt and his vest, and showed me lying upon his naked bosom a beautiful jewelled cross of a considerable size. "This," said he, lifting it up, "is an ancient Gnostic amulet. It is called the 'Moonlight Cross of the Gnostics.' I gave it to her on the night of our betrothal. She was a Roman Catholic. It is made of precious stones cut in facets, with rubies and diamonds and beryls so cunningly set that, when the moonlight falls on them, the cross flashes almost as brilliantly as when the sunlight falls on them and is kindled into living fire. These deep-coloured crimson rubies—almost as clear as diamonds—are not of the ordinary kind. They are true 'Oriental rubies,' and the jewellers would tell you that the mine which produced them has been lost during several centuries. But look here when I lift it up; the most wonderful feature of the jewel is the skill with which the diamonds are cut. The only shapes generally known are what are called the 'brilliant' and the 'rose,' but here the facets are arranged in an entirely different way, and evidently with the view of throwing light into the very hearts of the rubies, and producing this peculiar radiance."

He lifted the amulet again (which was suspended from his neck by a beautifully worked cord made of soft brown hair) into the rays from the moon. The light the jewel emitted was certainly of a strange and fascinating kind. The cross had been worn with the jewelled front upon his bosom instead of the smooth back, and the sharp facets of the cross had lacerated the scarred flesh underneath in a most cruel manner. He saw me shudder and understood why.

"Oh, I like that!" he said, with an ecstatic smile. "I like to feel it constantly on my bosom. It cannot cut deep

enough for me. This is her hair," he said, taking the hair-cord between his fingers and kissing it.

"How do you manage to exist, father," I said, "with that heavy sharp-edged jewel on your breast? you who cannot bear the gout with patience?"

"Exist? I could not exist *without* it. The gout is pain—this is not pain; it is joy, bliss, heaven! When I am dead it must lie for ever on my breast as it lies now, or I shall never rest in my grave."

He had been talking about amulets in the most quiet and matter-of-fact way during that morning; but the moment he produced this cross a strange change came over his face, something like the change that will come over a dull wood-fire when blown by the wind into a bright life of flame.

"Ha!" he muttered to himself, as his eyes widened and sparkled with a look of intense eagerness and his hand shook, sending the light of the beautiful jewel all about the room, "it is a sad pity he was not *her* son. How I should have loved him then! I like him now very much; but how I should have loved him then, for he is a brave boy. Oh, if I had only been born brave like him!" Then, suddenly recollecting himself, he closed his vest, and said: "Don't tell your mother, Hal; don't tell your mother that I have shown you this." Then he took it out again. "She who is dead cherished it," he continued, half to himself—"she cherished it above all things. She died, boy, and I couldn't help her. She used to wear the cross in the bosom of her dress; and there she was in the cove kissing it when the tide swept over her. I ought to have jumped down and died with her. *You* would have done it, Hal; your eyes say so. Oh, to be an Aylwin without the Aylwin courage!"

After a little time he said: "This has lain on her bosom, Hal, her bosom! It has been kissed by her, Hal, oh, a thousand thousand times! It had her last kiss. When I took it from the cold body which had been recovered, this cross seemed to be warm with her life and love."

And then he wept, and his tears fell thick upon his bosom and upon the amulet. The truth was clear enough now. The appalling death of his first wife, his love for her, and his remorse for not having jumped down the cliff and died with her, had affected his brain. He was a monomaniac, and all his thoughts were in some way clustered round the dominant one. He had studied amulets because the "Moonlight

Cross" had been cherished by her; he came to Switzerland every year because it was associated with her; he had joined the spiritualist body in the mad hope that *perhaps* there might be something in it, perhaps there might be a power that could call her back to earth. Even the favourite occupation of his life, visiting cathedrals and churches and taking rubbings from monumental brasses, had begun after her death; it had come from the fact (as I soon learned) that *she* had taken interest in monumental brasses, and had begun the collection of rubbings.

And yet this martyr to a mighty passion bore the character of a dreamy student; and his calm, unfurrowed face, on common occasions, expressed nothing but a rather dull kind of content! Here was a revelation of what, afterwards, was often revealed to me, that human personality is the crowning wonder of this wonderful universe, and that the forces which turn fire-mist into stars are not more inscrutable than is human character. He lifted up his head and gazed at me through his tears.

"Hal," he said, "do you know why I have shown you this? It *must*, MUST be buried with me at my death; and there is no one upon whose energy, truth, courage, and strength of will I can rely as I can upon yours. You must give me your word, Hal, that you will see it and this casket containing her letters buried with me."

I hesitated to become a party to such an undertaking as this. It savoured of superstition, I thought. Now, having at that very time abandoned all the superstitions and all the mystical readings of the universe which as a child I had inherited from ancestors, Romany and English, having at that very time begun to take a delight in the wonderful revelations of modern science, my attitude towards superstition —towards all supernaturalism—oscillated between anger and simple contempt.

"But," I said, "you surely will not have this beautiful old cross buried?" And as I looked at it, and the light fell upon it, there came from it strange flashes of fire, showing with what extraordinary skill the rubies and diamonds had been adjusted so that their facets should catch and concentrate the rays of the moon.

"Yes," he said, taking the cross again in his hand and fondling it passionately, "it must never be possessed by any one after me."

"But it might be stolen, father—stolen from your coffin."

"That would indeed be a disaster," he said with a shudder. Then a look of deadly vengeance overspread his face and brought out all its Romany characteristics as he said: "But with it there will be buried a curse written in Hebrew and English—a curse upon the despoiler, which will frighten off any thief who is in his senses."

And he showed me a large parchment scroll, folded exactly like a title deed, with the following curse and two verses from the 109th Psalm written upon it in Hebrew and English. The English version was carefully printed by himself in large letters:—

"He who shall violate this tomb,—he who shall steal this amulet, hallowed as a love-token between me and my dead wife,—he who shall dare to lay a sacrilegious hand upon this cross, stands cursed by God, cursed by love, and cursed by me, Philip Aylwin, lying here. 'Let there be no man to pity him, nor to have compassion upon his fatherless children. . . . Let his children be vagabonds, and beg their bread: let them seek it also out of desolate places.'—Psalm cix. So saith the Lord. Amen."

"I have printed the English version in large letters," he said, "so that any would-be despoiler must see it and read it at once by the dimmest lantern light."

"But, father," I said, "is it possible that you, an educated man, really believe in the efficacy of a curse?"

"If the curse comes straight from the heart's core of a man, as this curse comes from mine, Hal, how can it fail to operate by the mere force of will? The curse of a man who loved as I love upon the wretch who should violate a love-token so sacred as this—why, the disembodied spirits of all who have loved and suffered would combine to execute it!"

"Spirits!" I said. "Really, father, in times like these to talk of spirits!"

"Ah, Henry!" he replied, "I was like you once. I could once be content with Materialism—I could find it supportable once; but, should you ever come to love as I have loved (and, for your own happiness, child, I hope you never may), you will find that Materialism is intolerable, is hell itself, to the heart that has known a passion like mine. You will find that it is madness, Hal, madness, to believe in the word 'never'! you will find that you *dare* not leave untried any creed, howsoever wild, that offers the heart a ray of hope. Every object she cherished has become spiritualized, sub-

limated, has become alive—alive as this amulet is alive. See, the lights are no natural lights." And again he held it up.

"If on my death-bed," he continued, "I thought that this beloved cross and these sacred relics would ever get into other hands—would ever touch other flesh—than mine, I should die a maniac, Hal, and my spirit would never be released from the chains of earth."

It was the superstitious tone of his talk that irritated and hardened me. He saw it, and a piteous expression overspread his features.

"Don't desert your poor father," he said. "What I want is the word of an Aylwin that those beloved relics shall be buried with me. If I had *that*, I should be content to live, and content to die. Oh, Hal!"

He threw such an imploring gaze into my face as he said "Oh, Hal!" that, reluctant as I was to be mixed up with superstition, I promised to execute his wishes; I promised also to keep the secret from all the world during his life, and after his death to share it with those two only from whom, for family reasons, it could not be kept—my uncle Aylwin of Alvanley and my mother. He then put away the amulet, and his face resumed the look of placid content it usually wore. He was feeling the facets of the mysterious "Moonlight Cross"!

The most marvellous thing is this, however: his old relations towards me were at once resumed. He never alluded to the subject of his first wife again, and I soon found it difficult to believe that the conversation just recorded ever took place at all. Evidently his monomania only rose up to a passionate expression when fanned into sudden flame by talking about the cross. It was as though the shock of his first wife's death had severed his consciousness and his life in twain.

## II.

NATURALLY this visit to Switzerland cemented our intimacy, and it was on our return home that he suggested my accompanying him on one of his "rubbing expeditions."

"Henry," he said, "your mother has of late frequently discussed with me the question of your future calling in life.

She suggests a Parliamentary career. I confess that I find questions about careers exceedingly disturbing."

"There is only one profession I should like, father," I said, "and that is a painter's." In fact, the passion for painting had come on me very strongly of late. My dreams had from the first been of wandering with Winnie in a paradise of colour, and these dreams had of late been more frequent: the paradise of colour had been growing richer and rarer.

He shook his head gravely and said, "No, my dear; your mother would never allow it."

"Why not?" I said; "is painting low too?"

"Cyril Aylwin is low, at least so your mother and aunt say, especially your aunt. I have not perceived it myself, but then your mother's perceptive faculties are extraordinary—quite extraordinary."

"Did the lowness come from his being a painter, father?" I asked.

"Really, child, you are puzzling me. But I have observed you now for some weeks, and I quite believe that you would make one of the best rubbers who ever held a ball. I am going to Salisbury next week, and you shall then make your *début*."

This was in the midst of a very severe winter we had some years ago, when all Europe was under a coating of ice.

"But, father," I said, "sha'n't we find it rather cold?"

"Well," said my father, with a bland smile, "I will not pretend that Salisbury Cathedral is particularly warm in this weather, but in winter I always rub in knee-caps and mittens. I will tell Hodder to knit you a full set at once."

"But, father," I said, "Tom Wynne tells me that rubbing is the most painful of all occupations. He even goes so far sometimes as to say that it was the exhaustion of rubbing for you which turned him to drink."

"Nothing of the kind," said my father. "All that Tom needed to make him a good rubber was enthusiasm. I am strongly of opinion that without enthusiasm rubbing is of all occupations the most irksome, except perhaps for the quadrumana (who seem more adapted for this exercise), the most painful for the spine, the most cramping for the thighs, the most numbing for the fingers. It is a profession, Henry, demanding above every other, enthusiasm in the operator. Now Tom's enthusiasm for rubbing as an art was from the first exceedingly feeble."

I was on the eve of revolting, but I remembered what there was lacerating his poor breast, and consented. And when I heard hints of our "working the Welsh churches" my sudden enthusiasm for the rubber's art astonished even my father.

"My dear," he said to my mother at dinner one day, "what do you think? Henry has developed quite a sudden passion for rubbing."

I saw an expression of perplexity and mystification overspread my mother's sagacious face.

"And in the spring," continued my father, "we are going into Wales to rub."

"Into Wales, are you?" said my mother, in a tone of that soft voice whose meaning I knew so well.

My thoughts were continually upon Winifred, now that I was alone in the familiar spots. I had never seen her nor heard from her since we parted as children. She had only known me as a cripple. What would she think of me now? Did she ever think of me? She had not answered my childish letter, and this had caused me much sorrow and perplexity.

We did not go into Wales after all. But the result of this conversation took a shape that amazed me. I was sent to stay with my Aunt Prue in London in order that I might attend one of the Schools of Art. Yes, my mother thought it was better for me even to run the risk of becoming bohemianised like Cyril Aylwin, than to brood over Winnie or the scenes that were associated with our happy childhood.

In London I was an absolute stranger. We had no town house. On the few occasions when the family had gone to London, it was to stay in Belgrave Square with my Aunt Prue, who was an unmarried sister of my mother's.

"Since the death of the Prince Consort, to go no further back," she used to say, "a dreadful change has come over the tone of society; the love of bohemianism, the desire to take up any kind of people, if they are amusing, and still more if they are rich, is levelling everything. However, I'm nobody now; *I* say nothing."

What wonder that from my very childhood my aunt took a prejudice against me, and predicted for me a career "as deplorable as Cyril Aylwin's," and sympathised with my mother in her terror of the Gypsy strain in my father's branch of the family?

Her tastes and instincts being intensely aristocratic, she suffered a martyrdom from her ever present consciousness of this disgrace. She had seen very much more of what is called Society than my mother had ever an opportunity of seeing. It was not, however, aristocracy, but Royalty that won the true worship of her soul.

Although she was immeasurably inferior to my mother in everything, her influence over her was great, and it was always for ill. I believe that even my mother's prejudice against Tom Wynne was largely owing to my aunt, who disliked my relations towards Wynne simply because he did not represent one of the great Wynne families. But the remarkable thing was that, although my mother thus yielded to my aunt's influence, she in her heart despised her sister's ignorance and her narrowness of mind. She often took a humorous pleasure in seeing my aunt's aristocratic proclivities baffled by some vexing *contretemps* or by some slight passed upon her by people of superior rank, especially by those in the Royal circle.

There have been so many descriptions of art schools, from the famous "Gandish's" down to the very moment at which I write, that I do not intend to describe mine.

It would be very far from my taste to use a narrative like this, a narrative made sacred by the spiritual love it records, as a means of advertising efforts of such modest pretensions as mine when placed in comparison with the work of the illustrious painters my friendship with whom has been the great honour of my life. And if I allude here to the fact of my being a painter, it is in order that I may not be mistaken for another Aylwin, my cousin Percy, who in some unpublished poems of his which I have seen has told how a sailor was turned into a poet by love—love of Rhona Boswell. In the same way, these pages are written to tell how I was made a painter by love of her whom I first saw in Raxton churchyard, her who filled my being as Beatrice filled the being of Dante when "the spirit of life, which hath its dwelling in the secretest chamber of the heart, began to tremble so violently that the least pulses of his body shook therewith."

## III.

TIME went by, and I returned to Raxton. Just when I had determined that, come what would, I would go into Wales, Wynne one day told me that Winnie was coming to live with him at Raxton, her aunt having lately died. "The English lady," said he, "who lived with them so long and eddicated Winifred, has gone to live at Carnarvon to get the sea air."

This news was at once a joy and a perplexity.

Wynne, though still the handsomest and finest man in Raxton, had sunk much lower in intemperance of late. He now generally wound up a conversation with me by a certain stereotyped allusion to the dryness of the weather, which I perfectly understood to mean that he felt thirsty, and that an offer of half-a-crown for beer would not be unacceptable. He was a proud man in everything except in reference to beer. But he seemed to think there was no degradation in asking for money to get drunk with, though to have asked for it to buy bread would, I suppose, have wounded his pride. I did not then see so clearly as I now do the wrong of giving him those half-crowns. His annuity he had long since sold.

Spite of all his delinquencies, however, my father liked him; so did my uncle Aylwin of Alvanley. But my mother seemed positively to hate him. It was the knowledge of this that caused my anxiety about Winifred's return. I felt that complications must arise.

At this time I used to go to Dullingham every day. The clergyman there was preparing me for college.

On the Sunday following the day when I got such momentous news from Wynne, I was met suddenly, as my mother and I were leaving the church after the service, by the gaze of a pair of blue eyes that arrested my steps as by magic, and caused the church and the churchgoers to vanish from my sight.

The picture of Winifred that had dwelt in my mind so long was that of a beautiful child. The radiant vision of the girl before me came on me by surprise and dazzled me. Tall and slim she was now, but the complexion had not altered at all; the eyes seemed young and childlike as ever.

When our eyes met she blushed, then turned pale, and took hold of the top of a seat near which she was standing. She came along the aisle close to us gliding and slipping through the crowd, and passed out of the porch. My mother had seen my agitation, and had moved on in a state of haughty indignation. I had no room, however, at that moment for considerations of any person but one. I hurried out of the church, and, following Winifred, grasped her gloved hand.

"Winifred, you are come," I said; "I have been longing to see you."

She again turned pale and then blushed scarlet. Next she looked down me as if she had expected to see something which she did not see, and when her eyes were upraised again something in them gave me a strange fancy that she was disappointed to miss my crutches.

"Why didn't you write me from Wales, Winifred? Why didn't you answer my letter years ago?"

She hesitated, then said,

"My aunt wouldn't let me, sir."

"Wouldn't let you answer it! and why?"

Again she hesitated,

"I—I don't know, sir."

"You *do* know, Winifred. I see that you know, and you shall tell me. Why didn't your aunt let you answer my letter?"

Winifred's eyes looked into mine beseechingly. Then that light of playful humour, which I remembered so well, shot like a sunbeam across and through them as she replied—

"My aunt said we must both forget our pretty dream."

Almost before the words were out, however, the sunbeam fled from her eyes and was replaced by a look of terror. I now perceived that my mother, in passing to the carriage, had lingered on the gravel-path close to us, and had, of course overheard the dialogue. She passed on with a look of hate. I thought it wise to bid Winifred good-bye and join my mother.

As I stepped into the carriage I turned round and saw that Winifred was again looking wistfully at some particular part of me—looking with exactly that simple, frank, "objective" expression with which I was familiar.

"I knew it was the crutches she missed," I said to myself as I sat down by my mother's side; "she'll have to love me now because I am *not* lame."

I also knew something else: I must prepare for a conflict with my mother. My father, at this time in Switzerland, had written to say that he had been suffering acutely from an attack of what he called "spasms." He had "been much subject to them of late, but no one considered them to be really dangerous."

During luncheon I felt that my mother's eyes were on me. After it was over she went to her room to write in answer to my father's letter, and then later on she returned to me.

"Henry," she said, "my overhearing the dialogue in the churchyard between you and Wynne's daughter was, I need not say, quite accidental, but it is perhaps fortunate that I did overhear it."

"Why fortunate, mother? You simply heard her say that her aunt in Wales had forbidden her to answer a childish letter of mine written many years ago."

"In telling you which, the girl, I must say, proclaimed her aunt to be an exceedingly sensible and well conducted woman," said my mother.

"On that point, mother," I said, "you must allow me to hold a different opinion. I, for my part, should have said that Winifred's story proclaimed her aunt to be a worthy member of a flunkey society like this of ours—a society whose structure, political and moral and religious, is based on an adamantine rock of paltry snobbery."

It was impossible to restrain my indignation.

"I am aware, Henry," replied my mother calmly, "that it is one of the fashions of the hour for young men of family to adopt the language of Radical newspapers. In a country like this the affectation does no great harm, I grant, and my only serious objection to it is that it implies in young men of one's own class a lack of originality which is a little humiliating. I am aware that your cousin, Percy Aylwin, of Rington Manor, used to talk in the same strain as this, and ended by joining the Gypsies. But I came to warn you, Henry, I came to urge you not to injure this poor girl's reputation by such scenes as that I witnessed this morning."

I remained silent. The method of my mother's attack had taken me by surprise. Her sagacity was so much greater than mine, her power of fence was so much greater, her stroke was so much deadlier, that in all our encounters I had been conquered.

"It is for the girl's own sake that I speak to you," con-

tinued my mother. "She was deeply embarrassed at your method of address, and well she might be, seeing that it will be, for a long time to come, the subject of discussion in all the beer-houses which her father frequents."

"You speak as though she were answerable for her father's faults," I said, with heat.

"No," said my mother; "but *your* father is the owner of Raxton Hall, which to her and her class is a kind of Palace of the Cæsars. You belong to a family famous all along the coast; you are well known to be the probable heir of one of the largest landowners in England; you *may* be something more important still; while she, poor girl, what is she that you should rush up to her before all the churchgoers of the parish and address her as Winifred? The daughter of a penniless drunken reprobate. Every attention you pay her is but a slur upon her good name."

"There is not a lady in the county worthy to unlace her shoes," I cried, unguardedly. Then I could have bitten off my tongue for saying so.

"That may be," said my mother, with the quiet irony peculiar to her; "but so monstrous are the customs of England, Henry, so barbaric is this society you despise, that she, whose shoes no lady in the county is worthy to unlace, is in an anomalous position. Should she once again be seen talking familiarly with you, her character will have fled, and fled for ever. It is for you to choose whether you are set upon ruining her reputation."

I felt that what she said was true. I felt also that Winifred herself had recognized the net of conventions that kept us apart in spite of that close and tender intimacy which had been the one great factor of our lives. In a certain sense I was far more of a child of Nature than Winifred herself, inasmuch as, owing to my remarkable childish experience of isolation, I had imbibed a scepticism about the sanctity of conventions such as is foreign to the nature of woman, be she ever so unsophisticated, as Winifred's shyness towards me had testified.

As a child I had been neglected for the firstborn. I had enjoyed through this neglect an absolute freedom with regard to associating with fisher-boys and all the shoeless, hatless "sea-pups" of the sands, and now, when the time had come to civilise me, my mother had found it was too late. I was bohemian to the core. My childish intercourse with

Winifred had been one of absolute equality, and I could not now divest myself of this relation. These were my thoughts as I listened to my mother's words.

My great fear now, however, was lest I should say something to compromise myself, and so make matters worse. Before another word upon the subject should pass between my mother and me I must see Winifred—and then I had something to say to her which no power on earth should prevent me from saying. So I merely told my mother that there was much truth in what she had said, and proceeded to ask particulars about my father's recent illness. After giving me these particulars she left the room, perplexed, I thought, as to what had been the result of her mission.

## IV.

I REMAINED alone for some time. Then I told the servants that I was going to walk along the cliffs to Dullingham Church, where there was an evening service, and left the house. I hastened towards the cliffs, and descended to the sands, in the hope that Winifred might be roaming about there, but I walked all the way to Dullingham without getting a glimpse of her. The church service did not interest me that evening. I heard nothing and saw nothing. When the service was over I returned along the sands, sauntering and lingering in the hope that, late as it was now growing, the balmy evening might have enticed her out.

The evening grew to night, and still I lingered. The moon was nearly at the full, and exceedingly bright. The tide was down. The scene was magical; I could not leave it. I said to myself, "I will go and stand on the very spot where Winifred stood when she lisped 'certumly' to the proposal of her little lover."

It was not, after all, till this evening that I really knew how entirely she was a portion of my life.

I went and stood by the black boulder where I had received the little child's prompt reply. There was not a grain left, I knew, of that same sand which had been hallowed by the little feet of Winifred, but it served my mood just as well as though every grain had felt the beloved pressure. For that the very sands had loved the child, I half believed.

I said to myself, as I sat down upon the boulder, "At this very moment she is here, she is in Raxton. In a certain little cottage there is a certain little room." And then I longed to leave the sands, to go and stand in front of Wynne's cottage and dream there. But that would be too foolish. "I must get home," I thought. "The night will pass somehow, and in the morning I shall, as sure as fate, see her flitting about the sands she loves, and then what I have sworn to say to her I will say, and what I have sworn to do I will do, come what will."

Then came the puzzling question, how was I to greet her when we met? Was I to run up and kiss her, and hear her say, "Oh, I'm *so* pleased!" as she would sometimes say when I kissed her of yore? No; her deportment in the morning forbade *that*. Or was I to raise my hat and walk up to her saying, "How do you do, Miss Wynne? I'm glad to see you back, Miss Wynne," for she was now neither child nor young woman, she was a "girl." Perhaps I had better rush up to her in a bluff, hearty way, and say: "How do you do, Miss Winifred? Delighted to see you back to Raxton." Finally, I decided that circumstances must guide me entirely, and I sat upon the boulder meditating.

After a while I saw, or thought I saw, in the far distance, close to the waves, a moving figure among the patches of rocks and stones (some black and some white) that break the continuity of the sand on that shore at low water.

When the figure got nearer I perceived it to be a woman, a girl, who, every now and then, was stooping as if to pick up something from the pools of water left by the ebbing tide imprisoned amid the encircling rocks. At first I watched the figure, wondering in a lazy and dreamy way what girl could be out there so late.

But all at once I began to catch my breath and gasp. The sea-smells had become laden with a kind of paradisal perfume, ineffably sweet, but difficult to breathe all of a sudden. My heart too—what was amiss with that? And why did the muscles of my body seem to melt like wax? The lonely wanderer by the sea could be none other than Winifred.

"It is she!" I said. "There is no beach-woman or shore-prowling girl who, without raising an arm to balance her body, without a totter or a slip, could step in that way upon stones some of which are as slippery as ice with gelatinous weeds and slime, while others are as sharp as razors. To

walk like that the eye must be my darling's, that is to say, an eye as sure as a bird's; the ball of the foot must be the ball of a certain little foot I have often had in my hand wet with sea-water and gritty with sand. For such work a mountaineer or a cragsman, or Winifred, is needed." Then I recalled her love of marine creatures, her delight in seaweed, of which she would weave the most astonishing chaplets and necklaces coloured like the rainbow, "seaweed boas" and seaweed turbans, calling herself the princess of the sea (as indeed she was), and calling me her prince. "Yes," said I, "it is certainly she;" and when at last I espied a little dog by her side, Tom Wynne's little dog Snap (a descendant of the original Snap of our never-to-be-forgotten seaside adventures)—when I espied all these things I said, "Then the hour is come."

By this time my heart had settled down to a calmer throb, the paradisal scent had become more supportable, and I grew master of myself again. I was going towards her, when I stayed my steps, for she was already making her way, entirely unconscious of my presence, towards the boulder where I sat.

"I know what I will do," I said; "I will fling myself flat on the sands behind the boulder and watch her. I will observe her without being myself observed."

I was in the mood when one tries sportfully to deceive one's self as to the depth and intensity of the emotion within. Perhaps I would and perhaps I would not speak to her at all that night; but if I did speak, I would say and do what (on that day when I set out for school) I had sworn to say and do.

So there I lay hidden by the boulder and watched her. She made the circuit of each pool that lay across her path towards the cliffs,—made it apparently for the childish enjoyment of balancing herself on stones and snapping her fingers at the dog, who looked on with philosophic indifference at such a frivolous waste of force. Yes, though a tall girl of seventeen, she was the same incomparable child who had coloured my life and stirred the entire air of my imagination with the breezes of a new heaven. The voice of the tumbling sea in the distance, the caresses of the tender breeze, the wistful gaze of the great moon overhead, were companionship enough for her—for her whose loveliness would have enchanted a world. She had no idea that there

was at this moment stepping round those black stones the loveliest woman then upon the earth. If she had had that idea she would still have been the star of all womanhood, but she would not have been Winifred. A charm superior to all other women's charm she still would have had; but she would not have been Winifred.

When she left the rocks and came upon the clear sand, she stopped and looked at her sweet shadow in the moonlight. Then, with the self-pleasing playfulness of a kitten, she stood and put herself into all kinds of postures to see what varying silhouettes they would make on the hard and polished sand (that shone with a soft lustre like satin); now throwing up one arm, now another, and at last making a pirouette, twirling her shawl round, trying to keep it in a horizontal position by the rapidity of her movements.

The interest of the philosophic Snap was aroused at last. He began wheeling and barking round her, tearing up the sand as he went like a little whirlwind. This induced Winifred to redouble her gymnastic exertions. She twirled round with the velocity of an engine wheel. At last, finding the enjoyment it gave to Snap, she changed the performance by taking off her hat, flinging it high in the air, catching it, flinging it up again and again, while the moving shadow it made was hunted along the sand by Snap with a volley of deafening barks. By this time she had got close to me, but she was too busy to see me. Then she began to dance—the very same dance with which she used to entertain me in those happy days. I advanced from my stone, dodging and slipping behind her, unobserved even by Snap, so intent were these two friends upon this entertainment, got up, one would think, for whatsoever sylphs or gnomes or water sprites might be looking on.

How could I address in the language of passion, which alone would have expressed my true feelings, a dancing fairy such as this?

"Bravo!" I said, as she stopped, panting and breathless. "Why, Winifred, you dance better than ever!"

She leaped away in alarm and confusion; while Snap, on the contrary, welcomed me with much joy.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir," she said; not looking at me with the blunt frankness of childhood, as the little woman of the old days used to do, but dropping her eyes. "I didn't see you."

"But *I* saw *you*, Winifred; I have been watching you for the last quarter of an hour."

"Oh, you never have!" said she, in distress; "what could you have thought? I was only trying to cheer up poor Snap, who is out of sorts. What a mad romp you must have thought me, sir!"

"Why, what's the matter with Snap?"

"I don't know. Poor Snap" (stooping down to fondle him, and at the same time to hide her face from me, for she was talking against time to conceal her great confusion and agitation at seeing me. *That* was perceptible enough).

Then she remembered she was hatless.

"Oh, dear, where's my hat?" said she, looking round.

I had picked up the hat before accosting her, and it was now dangling behind me. I, too, began talking against time, for the beating of my heart began again at the thought of what I was going to say and do.

"Hat!" I said; "do *you* wear hats, Winifred? I should as soon have thought of hearing the Queen of the Tylwyth Teg ask for her hat as you, after such goings-on as those I have just been witnessing. You see I have not forgotten the Welsh you taught me."

"Oh, but my hat—where is it?" cried she, vexed and sorely ashamed. So different from the unblenching child who loved to stand hatless and feel the rain-drops on her bare head!

"Well, Winifred, I've found a hat on the sand," I said; "here it is."

"Thank you, sir," said she, and stretched out her hand for it.

"No," said I, "I don't for one moment believe in its belonging to you, any more than it belongs to the Queen of the 'Fair People.' But if you'll let me put it on your head I'll give you the hat I've found," and with a rapid movement I advanced and put it on her head. I had meant to seize that moment for saying what I had to say, but was obliged to wait.

An expression of such genuine distress overspread her face, that I regretted having taken the liberty with her. Her bearing altogether was puzzling me. She seemed instinctively to feel as I felt, that raillery was the only possible attitude to take up in a situation so extremely romantic—a meeting on the sands at night between me and her who was

neither child nor woman—and yet she seemed distressed at the raillery.

Embarrassment was rapidly coming between us.

There was a brief silence, during which Winifred seemed trying to move away from me.

"Did you—did you see me from the cliffs, sir, and come down?" said Winifred.

"Winifred," said I, "the polite thing to say would be 'Yes'; but you know 'Fighting Hal' never was remarkable for politeness, so I will say frankly that I did not come down from the cliffs on seeing you. But when I did see you, I wasn't very likely to return without speaking to you."

"I am locked out," said Winifred, in explanation of her moonlight ramble. "My father went off to Dullingham with the key in his pocket while I and Snap were in the garden, so we have to wait till his return. Good night, sir," and she gave me her hand. I seemed to feel the fingers round my heart, and knew that I was turning very pale. "The same little sunburnt fingers," I said, as I retained them in mine—"just the same, Winifred! But it's not 'good night' yet. No, no, it's not good night yet; and, Winifred, if you dare to call me 'sir' again, I declare I'll kiss you where you stand. I will, Winifred. I'll put my arms right around that slender waist and kiss you under that moon, as sure as you stand on these sands."

"Then I will not call you 'sir,'" said Winifred, laughingly. "Certainly I will not call you 'sir,' if that is to be the penalty."

"Winifred," said I, "the last time that I remember to have heard you say 'certainly' was on this very spot. You then pronounced it 'certumly,' and that was when I asked you if I might be your lover. You said 'certumly' on that occasion without the least hesitation."

Winifred, as I could see, even by the moonlight, was blushing. "Ah, those childish days!" she said. "How delightful they were, sir!"

"'Sir' again!" said I. "Now, Winifred, I am going to execute my threat—I am indeed."

She put up her hands before her face and said:

"Oh, don't! please don't."

The action no doubt might seem coquettish, but the tone of her voice was so genuine, so serious—so agitated even—that I paused; I paused in bewilderment and perplexity

concerning us both. I observed that her fingers shook as she held them before her face. That she should be agitated at seeing me after so long a separation did not surprise me, I being deeply agitated myself. It was the *nature* of her emotion that puzzled me, until suddenly I remembered my mother's words.

I perceived then that, child of Nature as she still was, some one had given her a careful training which had transfigured my little Welsh rustic into a lady. She had not failed to apprehend the anomaly of her present position—on the moonlit sands with me. Though I could not break free from the old equal relations between us, Winifred had been able to do so.

"To her," I thought with shame, "my offering to kiss her at such a place and time must have seemed an insult. The very fact of my attempting to do so must have seemed to indicate an offensive consciousness of the difference of our social positions. It must have seemed to show that I recognized a distinction between the drunken organist's daughter and a lady."

I saw now, indeed, that she felt this keenly; and I knew that it was nothing but the sweetness of her nature, coupled with the fond recollection of the old happy days, that restrained that high spirit of hers, and prevented her from giving expression to her indignation and disgust.

All this was shown by the appealing look on her sweet, fond face, and I was touched to the heart.

"Winifred—Miss Wynne," I said, "I beg your pardon most sincerely. The shadow-dance has been mainly answerable for my folly. You did look so exactly the little Winifred, my heart's sister, that I felt it impossible to treat you otherwise than as that dear child-friend of years ago."

A look of delight broke over her face.

"I felt sure it was so," she said. "But it is a relief that you have said it." And the tears came to her eyes.

"Thank you, Winifred, for having pardoned me. I feel that you would have forgiven no one else as you have forgiven me. I feel that you would not have forgiven any one else than your old child-companion, whom on a memorable occasion you threatened to hit, and then had not the heart to do so."

"I don't think I *could* hit *you*," said she, in a meditative

tone of perfect unconsciousness as to the bewitching import of her speech.

"Don't you think you could?" I said, drawing nearer, but governing my passion.

"No," said she, looking now for the first time with those wide-open confiding eyes, which, as a child, were the chief characteristic of her face, "I don't think I could hit you, whatever you did."

"Couldn't you, Winifred?" I said, coming still nearer, in order to drink to the full the wonder of her beauty, the thrill at my heart bringing, as I felt, a pallor to my cheek. "Don't you think you could hit your old playfellow, Winifred?"

"No," she said, still gazing in the same dreamy, reminiscent way straight into my eyes as of yore. "As a child you were so delightful. And then you were so kind to me!"

At that word "kind" from *her* to *me* I could restrain myself no longer; I shouted with a wild laughter of uncontrollable passion as I gazed at her through tears of love and admiration and deep gratitude—gazed till I was blind. My throat throbbed till it ached: I could get out no more words; I could only gaze. At my shout Winifred stood bewildered and confused. She did not understand a mood like that. Having got myself under control, I said:

"Winifred, it is not my doing; it is Fate's doing that we meet here on this night, and that I am driven to say here what I had as a schoolboy sworn should be said whenever we should meet again."

"I think," said Winifred, pulling herself up with the dignity of a queen, "that if you have anything important to say to me it had better be at a more seasonable time than at this hour of night, and at a more seasonable place than on these sands."

"No, Winifred," said I, "the time is *now*, and the place is here—here on this very spot where once on a time, you said 'certumly' when a little lover asked your hand. It is now and here, Winifred, that I will say what I have to say."

"And what is that, sir?" said Winifred, much perplexed and disturbed.

"I have to say, Winifred, that the man does not live and never *has* lived," said I, with suppressed vehemence, "who loved a woman as I love you."

"Oh, sir! oh, Henry!" returned Winifred, trembling, then standing still and whiter than the moon.

"And the reason why no man has ever loved a woman as I love you, Winifred, is because your match, or anything like your match, has never trod the earth before."

"Oh, Henry, my dear Henry! you *must* not say such things to me, your poor Winifred."

"But that isn't all that I swore I'd say to you, Winifred."

"Don't say any more—not to-night, not to-night."

"What I swore I would ask you, Winifred, is this: will you be Henry's wife?"

She gave one hysterical sob, and swayed till she nearly fell on the sand, and said, while her face shone like a pearl:

"Henry's wife!"

She recovered herself and stood and looked at me; her lips moved, but I waited in vain—waited in a fever of expectation—for her answer. None came. I gazed into her eyes, but they now seemed filled with visions—visions of the great race to which she belonged—visions in which her English lover had no place. Suddenly, and for the first time I felt that she who had inspired me with this all-conquering passion, though the penniless child of a drunken organist, was the daughter of Snowdon—a representative of the Cymric race that was once so mighty, and is still more romantic in its associations than all others. Already in the little talk I had had with her I began to guess what I realised before the evening was over, that, owing to the influence of the English lady, Miss Dalrymple, who had lodged at the cottage with her, she was more than my own equal in culture, and could have held her own with almost any girl of her own age in England. It was only in her subjection to Cymric superstitions that she was benighted.

"Winnie," I murmured, "what have you to say?"

After a while her eyes seemed to clear of the visions, and she said:

"What changes have come upon us both, Henry, since that childish betrothal on the sands!"

"Happy changes for one of the child-lovers," I said—"happy changes for the one who was then a lonely cripple shut out from all sympathy save that which the other child-lover could give."

"And yet you then seemed happy, Henry—happy with Winnie to help you up the gangways. And how happy Winnie was! But now the child-lover is a cripple no longer:

he is very, very strong—he is so strong that he could carry Winnie up the gangways in his arms, I think."

The thrill of natural pride which such recognition of my physical powers would otherwise have given me was quelled by a something in the tone in which she spoke.

"And he is powerful in every way," she went on, as if talking to herself. "He is a great rich Englishman to whom (as auntie was never tired of saying) that childish betrothal must needs seem a dream—a quaint and pretty dream."

"And so your aunt said that, Winnie. How far from the truth she was you see to-night."

"Yes, she thought you would forget all about me; and yet she could not have felt quite confident about it, for she made me promise that if you should not forget me—if you should ever ask me what you have just asked—she made me promise——"

"What, Winnie? what? She did not make you promise that you would refuse me?"

"That is what she asked me to promise."

"But you did not."

"I did not."

"No, no! you did not, Winnie. My darling refused to make any such cruel, monstrous promise as that."

"But I promised her that I would in such an event wait a year—at least a year—before betrothing myself to you."

"Shame! shame! What made her do this cruel thing? A year! wait for a year!"

"She brought forward many reasons, Henry, but upon two of them she was constantly dwelling."

"And what were these?"

"Well, the news of the death of your brother Frank of course reached us in Shire-Carnarvon, and how well I remember hearing my aunt say, 'Henry Aylwin will be one of the wealthiest landowners in England.' And I remember how my heart sank at her words, for I was always thinking of the dear little lame boy with the language of suffering in his eyes and the deep music of sorrow in his voice."

"Your heart sank, Winnie, and why?"

"I felt as if a breath of icy air had blown between us, dividing us forever. And then my aunt began to talk about you and your future."

After some trouble I persuaded Winnie to tell me what

was the homily that this aunt of hers preached *à propos* of Frank's death. And as she talked I could not help observing what, as a child, I had only observed in a dim, semi-conscious way—a strange kind of double personality in Winnie. At one moment she seemed to me to be nothing but the dancing fairy of the sands, objective and unconscious as a young animal playing to itself, at another she seemed the mouthpiece of the narrow world-wisdom of this Welsh aunt. No sooner had she spoken of herself as a friendless, homeless girl, than her brow began to shine with the pride of the Cymry.

"My aunt," said she, "used to tell me that until disaster came upon my uncle, and they were reduced to living upon a very narrow income, he and she never really knew what love was—they never really knew how rich their hearts were in the capacity of loving."

"Ah, I thought so," I said bitterly. "I thought the text was,

"'Love in a hut, with water and a crust.'"

"No," said Winifred firmly, "that was not the text. She believed that the wolf must not be very close to the door behind which love is nestling."

"Then what did she believe? In the name of common sense, Winnie, what did she believe?"

"She believed," said Winnie, her cheeks flushing and her eyes brightening as she went on, "that of all the schemes devised by man's evil genius to spoil his nature, to make him self-indulgent, and luxurious, and tyrannical, and incapable of understanding what the word 'love' means, the scheme of showering great wealth upon him is the most perfect."

"Ah, yes, yes; the old nonsense. Easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of love. And in what way did she enlarge upon this most charitable theme?"

"She told me dreadful things about the demoralising power of riches in our time."

"Dreadful things! What were they, Winnie?"

"She told me how insatiable is the greed for pleasure at this time. She told me that the passion of vanity—'the greatest of all the human passions,' as she used to say—has taken the form of money-worship in our time, sapping all the noblest instincts of men and women, and in rich people

poisoning even parental affection, making the mother thirst for the pleasures which in old days she would only have tried to win for her child. She told me stories—dreadful stories—about children with expectations of great wealth who watched the poor grey hairs of those who gave them birth, and counted the years and months and days that kept them from the gold which modern society finds to be more precious than honour, family, heroism, genius, and all that was held precious in less materialised times. She told me a thousand other things of this kind, and when I grew older she put into my hand what was written on the subject."

"Good God! Has the narrow-minded tomfoolery got a literature?"

Winnie went on with her eloquent account of her aunt's doctrines, and to my surprise I found that there actually *was* a literature on the subject.

Winnie's bright eyes had actually pored over old and long Chartist tracts translated into Welsh, and books on the Christian Socialism of Charles Kingsley, and pamphlets on more recent kinds of Socialism.

As she went on I could not help murmuring now and then, "What surroundings for my Winnie!"

"And the result of all this was, Winnie, that your aunt asked you to promise not to marry a man demoralised by privileges and made contemptible by wealth."

"That is what she wanted me to promise; but as I have said, I did not. But I did promise to wait for a year and see what effect wealth would have upon you."

"Did your aunt not tell you also that the man who marries you can never be unmanned by wealth, because he will know that everything he can give is as dross when set against Winnie's love and Winnie's beauty? Did she not also tell you that?"

"Love and beauty!" said Winnie. "Even if a woman's beauty did not depend for existence upon the eyes that look upon it, I should want to give more to my hero than love and beauty. I should want to give him help in the battle of life, Henry. I should want to buckle on his armour, and sharpen the point of his lance, and whet the edge of his sword; a rich man's armour is bank-notes, and Winnie knows nothing of such paper. His spear, I am told, is a bullion bar, and Winnie's fingers scarcely know the touch of gold."

"Then you agree, Winnie, with these strange views of your aunt?"

"I do partly agree with them now. Ever since I saw you to-day in the churchyard I have partly agreed with them."

"And why?"

"Because already prosperity or bodily vigour or something has changed your eyes and changed the tone of your voice."

"You mean that my eyes are no longer so full of trouble; and as to my voice—how should my voice not change, seeing that it was the voice of a child when you last listened to it?"

"It is impossible for me even now, after I have thought about it so much, to put into words that expression in your eyes which won me as a child. All I knew at the time was that it fascinated me. And as I now recall it, all I know is that your gaze then seemed full of something which I can give a name to now, though I did not understand it then—the pathos and tenderness and yearning, which come, as I have been told, from suffering, and that your voice seemed to have the same message. That expression and that tone are gone—they will, of course, never return to you now. Your life is, and will be, too prosperous for that. But still I hope and believe that in a year's time prosperity will not have worked in you any of the mischief that my aunt feared. For you have a noble nature, Henry, and to spoil you will not be easy. You will never be the dear little Henry I loved, but you will still be nobler and greater than other men, I think."

"Do you really mean that my lameness was a positive attraction to you? Do you really mean that the very change in me which I thought would strengthen the bond between us—my restoration to health—weakens it? That is impossible, Winnie."

She remained silent for a time, as though lost in thought, and then said: "I do not believe that any woman can understand the movements of her own heart where love is concerned. My aunt used to say I was a strange girl, and I am afraid I am strange and perverse. She used to say that in my affections I was like no other creature in the world."

"How should Winifred be like any other creature in the world?" I said. "She would not be Winifred if she were. But what did your aunt mean?"

"When I was quite a little child she noticed that I was neglecting a favourite mavis which I used to delight to listen to as he warbled from his wicker cage. She watched me, and found that my attention was all given to a wounded bird that I had picked up on the Capel Curig road. 'Winnie,' she said, 'nothing can ever win your love until it has first won your pity. A bird with a broken wing would be always more to you than a sound one!' "

"Your aunt was right," I said, "as no one should know better than I. For was it not the new kind of pity shining in those eyes of yours that revealed to me a new heaven in my loneliness? And when my brother Frank on that day in the wood stood over us in all the pride of his boyish strength, do I not remember the words you spoke?"

"What were they? I have quite forgotten them."

"You said, 'I don't think I could love any one very much who was not lame.' "

"Ah! did I really say that? It was quite true, Henry. I could admire your brother very much for being so handsome and strong and active, but he was too independent of love to win love from me. That child-love was the great educating experience of my life. It taught me the bliss of loving the afflicted—I mean the bliss of loving those to whom love comes as the very breath of heaven."

"Your aunt spoke the truth, indeed, when she said you were a strange girl. But is it really possible that on account of the blessings God has given me, health and wealth and strength—is it really possible that on account of those very blessings which most women find attractive in a man your heart is turned from me? A strange girl, indeed!" I murmured, lost in wonder at this new phase of the mystery of a woman's heart. "Who was the fool," I said to myself, "who said most women have no characters at all?"

For this conversation with Winnie first opened my eyes to the fact that, excepting in the merest superficials, there is a far greater variety in women than in men. In the deepest movements of the heart no two women are alike. Winnie's eccentricity of character was a revelation indeed. Ever since my return to bodily strength and agility I had been saying to myself, "If Winnie could only see me now! If Winnie could love me in those dark days that she turned to sunshine—when I was one of Destiny's own pariahs—if she could love me as a forlorn cripple hobbling upon

crutches—what would be her feelings if she could see me now?"

As these thoughts came to me Winnie seemed to read them in my face, for she said: "Ah, yes, mine is indeed a strange, eccentric nature. After I was separated from you my thoughts of you were always as the brave little cripple with the deep, yearning eyes, who could not get up the gangways without me. I used to think about you in Wales, and especially when I was rambling about Snowdon, until I seemed to feel again the pressure—delicious pressure—of your hand on my shoulder for support. I shall never feel that pressure again, Henry. You can get up the gangways of life without me now."

"Who knows, Winifred," I said, "but that calamity may yet put that lost light into my eyes and that lost tone into my voice? But let the engagement stand thus," I said, smiling. "As I am not pledged to your aunt to wait for a year, let ours be a one-sided betrothal. Let Hal be betrothed to Winnie, while Winnie is not betrothed to Hal until a year has proved him to be invulnerable to the poisonous mischief of wealth."

"That would indeed be something new in betrothals," said Winifred with a strange smile.

"Has not everything in connection with us two been new?" I said. "Why should there not be a new kind of betrothal between us? Did not the French wit say that in every love affair there were two parties—one who is loved, and the other *qui se laisse aimer?*"

"No, you musn't put it so, dear Henry; you musn't put it in that way. My aunt did not object to the child-betrothal of long ago; she did not object to the little harum-scarum Winnie saying 'certumly'! when the little cripple proposed to her on the boulder."

"Let us renew that betrothal and be children again," I said.

She then told me that her kind friend Miss Dalrymple had always advised her to seek a situation as governess in Wales.

"I have now determined to do so," said Winifred, while a mournful look came into her eyes which I found it easy to understand, knowing as I did what she must already have seen of her father's mode of life.

"And," said I, "to show you that the leprosy of wealth you

dread has not destroyed me as a man, I will in a year's time go to Wales, and we will be betrothed on Snowdon (I am afraid we can't be married there), and we will be married in Wales and your bridesmaids shall be your two Gypsy friends."

## V.

I WONDER what words could render that love-dream on the dear silvered sands, with the moon overhead, the dark shadowy cliffs and the old church on one side, and the North Sea murmuring a love-chime on the other!

Suffice it to record that Winifred, with a throb in her throat (a throb that prevented her from pronouncing her n's with the clarity that some might have desired), said "certumly" again to Henry's suit,—"Certumly, if in a year's time you seek me out in the mountains, and your eyes and voice show that prosperity has not spoiled you, but that you are indeed my Henry." And this being settled in strict accordance with her aunt's injunctions, she never tried to disguise how happy she was, but told Henry again and again in answer to his importunate questions—told him with her frank courage how she had loved him from the first in the old churchyard as a child—loved him for what she called his love-eyes; told him—ah! what did she not tell him? I must not go on. These things should not be written about at all but for the demands of my story.

And how soon she forgot that the betrothal was all on one side! I could write out every word of that talk. I remember every accent of her voice, every variation of light that came and went in her eyes, every ripple of love-laughter, every movement of her body, lissome as a greyhound's, graceful as a bird's. For fully an hour it lasted. And remember, reader, that it was on the silvered sands, every inch of which was associated with some reminiscence of childhood; it was beneath a moon smiling as fondly and brightly as she ever smiled on the domes of Venice or between the trees of Fiesole; it was by the margin of waves whose murmurs were soft and perfumed as Winifred's own breathings when she slept; and remember that the girl was Winifred herself, and that the boy—the happy boy—had Winifred's

love. Ah! but that last element of that hour's bliss is just what the reader cannot realise, because he can only know Winifred through these poor words. That is the distressing side of a task like mine. The beloved woman here called Winifred (no phantom of an idle imagination, but more real to me and dear to me than this soul and body I call my own) —this Winifred can only live for you, reader, through my feeble, faltering words; and yet I ask you to listen to the story of such a love as mine.

"Winnie," I said, "you have often as a child sung songs of Snowdon to me and told me of others you used to sing. I should love to hear one of these now, with the chime of the North Sea for an accompaniment instead of the instrument you tell me your Gypsy friend used to play. Before we go up the gangway, do sing me a verse of one of those songs."

After some little persuasion she yielded and sang in a soft undertone the following verse:

"I met in a glade a lone little maid
At the foot of y Wyddfa the white;
Oh, lissome her feet as the mountain hind,
And darker her hair than the night;
Her cheek was like the mountain rose,
But fairer far to see,
As driving along her sheep with a song,
Down from the hills came she."*

"What a beautiful world it is!" said she, in a half-whisper, as we were about to part at the cottage-door, for I had refused to leave her on the sands or even at the garden-gate. "I should like to live forever," she whispered; "shouldn't you, Henry?"

"Well, that all depends upon the person I lived with. For instance, I shouldn't care to live for ever with Widow Shales, the pale-faced tailoress, nor yet with her hump-backed son, whose hump was such a constant source of wistful wonder and solicitude to you as a child."

*"Mi gwrddais gynt a morwynig,
Wrth odreu y Wyddfa wen,
Un ysgafn ei throed fel yr ewig
A gwallt fel y nos ar ei phen;
Ei grudd oedd fel y rhosyn,
Un hardd a gwen ei gwawr;
Yn canu cân, a'i defaid mân,
O'r Wyddfa'n d'od i lawr."

She gave a merry little laugh of reminiscence. Then she said, "But you could live with *me* for ever, couldn't you, Henry?" plucking a leaf from the grape-vine on the wall and putting it between her teeth.

"For ever and ever, Winifred."

"It fills me with wonder," said she, after a while, "the thought of being Henry's wife. It is so delightful and yet so fearful."

By this I knew she had not forgotten that look of hate on my mother's face.

She put her hand on the latch and found that the door was now unlocked.

"But where is the fearful part of it, Winifred?" I said. "I am not a cannibal."

"You ought to marry a great English lady, dear, and I'm only a poor girl; you seem to forget all about that, you silly fond boy. You forget I'm only a poor girl—just Winifred," she continued.

"Just Winifred," I said, taking her hand and preventing her from lifting the latch.

"I've lived," said she, "in a little cottage like this with my aunt and Miss Dalrymple and done everything."

"Everything's a big word, Winifred. What may everything include in your case?"

"Include!" said Winifred; "oh, everything, housekeeping and——"

"Housekeeping!" said I. "Racing the winds with Rhona Boswell and other Gypsy children up and down Snowdon—that's been *your* housekeeping."

"Cooking," said Winifred, maintaining her point.

"Oh, what a fib, Winifred! These sunburnt fingers may have picked wild fruits, but they never made a pie in their lives."

"Never made a pie! I make beautiful pies and things; and when we're married I'll make your pies—may I, instead of a conceited man-cook?"

"No, Winifred. Never make a pie or do a bit of cooking in *my* house, I charge you."

"Oh, why not?" said Winifred, a shade of disappointment overspreading her face. "I suppose it's unladylike to cook."

"Because," said I, "once let me taste something made by these tanned fingers, and how could I ever afterwards eat anything made by a man-cook, conceited or modest? I

should say to that poor cook, 'Where is the Winifred flavour, cook? I don't taste those tanned fingers here.' And then, suppose you were to die first, Winifred, why I should have to starve, just for the want of a little Winifred flavour in the pie-crust. Now I don't want to starve, and you sha'n't cook."

"Oh, Hal, you dear, dear fellow!" shrieked Winifred, in an ecstasy of delight at this nonsense. Then her deep love overpowered her quite, and she said, her eyes suffused with tears, "Henry, you can't *think* how I love you. I'm sure I couldn't live even in heaven without you."

Then came the shadow of a lich-owl, as it whisked past us towards the apple-trees.

"Why, you'd be obliged to live without me, Winifred, if I were still at Raxton."

"No," said she, "I'm quite sure I couldn't. I should have to come in the winds and play round you on the sands. I should have to peep over the clouds and watch you. I should have to follow you about wherever you went. I should have to beset you till you said, 'Bother Winnie! I wish she'd keep in heaven.' "

I saw, however, that the owl's shadow had disturbed her, and I lifted the latch of the cottage door for her. We were met by a noise so loud that it might have come from a trombone.

"Why, what on earth is that?" I said.

I could see the look of shame break over Winifred's features as she said "Father." Yes, it was the snoring of Wynne in a drunken sleep: it filled the entire cottage.

The poor girl seemed to feel that that brutal noise had, somehow, coarsened *her*, and she actually half shrank from me as I gave her a kiss and left her.

Wondering how I should at such an hour get into the house without disturbing my mother and the servants, I passed along the same road where, as a crippled child, I had hobbled on that bright afternoon when love was first revealed to me. Ah, what a different love was this which was firing my blood, and making dizzy my brain! That child-love had softened my heart in its deep distress, and widened my soul. This new and mighty passion in whose grasp I was, this irresistible power that had seized and possessed my entire being, wrought my soul in quite a different sort, concentrating and narrowing my horizon till the human life out-

side the circle of our love seemed far, far away, as though I were gazing through the wrong end of a telescope. I had learned that he who truly loves is indeed born again, becomes a new and different man. Was it only a few short hours ago, I asked myself, that I was listening to my mother's attack upon Winifred? Was it this very evening that I was sitting in Dullingham Church?

How far away in the past seemed those events! And as to my mother's anger against Winifred, that anger and cruel scorn of class which had concerned me so much, how insignificant now seemed this and every other obstacle in love's path! I looked up at the moonlit sky; I leaned upon a gate and looked across the silent fields where Winifred and I used to gather violets in spring, hedge-roses in summer, mushrooms in autumn, and I said, "I will marry her; she shall be mine; she *shall* be mine, though all the powers on earth, all the powers in the universe, should say nay."

As I spoke I saw that lights were flashing to and fro in the windows of the Hall. "My poor father is dead," I said. I turned and ran up the road. "Oh, that I could have seen him once again!" At the hall door I was met by a servant, and learnt that, while I had been love-making on the sands, a message had come from the Continent with news of my father's death.

## VI.

THERE was no meeting Winifred on the next night.

It was decided that my uncle's private secretary should go to Switzerland to bring the body to England. I (remembering my promise about the mementoes) insisted on accompanying him. We started on the morrow, preceded by a message to my father's Swiss friends ordering an embalmment. Before starting I tried to see Winifred; but she had gone to Dullingham.

On our arrival at the little Swiss town, we found that the embalmment had been begun. The body was still in the hands of a famous embalmer—an Italian Jew settled at Geneva, the only successful rival there of Professor Laskowski. He was celebrated for having revived the old Hebraic method of embalmment in spices, and improving it by

the aid of the modern discoveries in antiseptics of Laskowski, Signor Franchina of Naples, and Dr. Dupré of Paris. This physician told me that by his process the body would, without the peculiarly-sealed coffin used by the Swiss embalmers, last "firm and white as Carrara marble for a thousand years."

The people at the chalet had naturally been much astonished to find upon my father's breast a jewelled cross lying. As soon as I entered the house they handed it to me.

For some reason or another this amulet and the curse had haunted my imagination as much as if I believed in amulets and curses, though my reason told me that everything of the kind was sheer nonsense. I could not sleep for thinking about it, and in the night I rose from my bed, and, opening the window, held up the cross in the moonlight. The facets caught the silvery rays and focused them. The amulet seemed to shudder with some prophecy of woe. It was now that, for the first time, I began to feel the signs of that great struggle between reason and the inherited instinct of superstition which afterwards played so important a part in my life. I then took up the parchment scroll, and opened it and re-read the curse. The great letters in which the English version was printed seemed to me larger by the light of the moon than they had seemed by daylight.

We had to wait for some time in Switzerland. In a locked drawer I found the casket and a copy of *The Veiled Queen.* I read much in the book. Every word I found there was in flat contradiction to my own mode of thought.

Did the shock of this dreadful catastrophe drive Winifred from my mind? No, nothing could have done that. My soul seemed, as I have said, to be new-born, and all emotions, passions, and sentiments that were not connected with her seemed to be shadowy and distant, like ante-natal dreams. It would be hypocrisy not to confess this frankly, regardless of the impression against me it may make on the reader's mind. Yet I had a real affection for my father. In spite of his extraordinary obliviousness of my very existence till the last year of his life, I was strongly attached to him, and his death made me see nothing but his virtues; yet my soul was so filled with my passion for Winifred as to have but little room for sorrow. As to my mother, her attachment to my father knew no bounds, and her grief at her bereavement knew none.

A day or two before the funeral my uncle Aylwin of Alvanley arrived, and his presence was a great comfort to her. Owing to my father's position in the county a great deal of funereal state was considered necessary, and there was much hurry and bustle.

My uncle having known Wynne when quite a young man, before intemperance had degraded him, took an interest in him still. He had called at the cottage as he passed along Wilderness Road towards Raxton, and the result of this was that the organist came to speak to him at our house upon some matter in connection with the funeral service. My mother was greatly vexed at this. Her conduct on the occasion alarmed me. Ever since Frank's death had made it evident not only that I should succeed to all the property of my uncle Aylwin of Alvanley, but that I might even succeed to something greater, to the earldom which was the glory and pride of the Aylwins, my mother had kept a jealous and watchful eye upon me, being, as I afterwards learned, not unmindful of the early child-loves of Winifred and myself; and the advent to Raxton of Winifred, as a beautiful tall girl, had aroused her fears as well as her wrath.

The day of the funeral came, and the question of the casket and the amulet was on my mind. The important thing, of course, was that the matter should be kept absolutely secret. The valuables must be placed in secrecy with the embalmed corpse at the last moment, before the screwing down of the coffin, when servants and undertakers were out of sight and hearing.

My mother knew what had been my father's instructions to me, and was desirous that they should be fulfilled, though she scorned the superstition. She and I placed the casket and the scroll bearing the written curse upon it beneath my father's head, and hung the chain of the amulet around his neck, so that the cross lay with the jewels uppermost upon his breast. Then the undertakers were called in to screw down the coffin in my presence. My mother afterwards called me to her room, and told me that she was much troubled about the cross. The amulet being of great value, my uncle Aylwin of Alvanley had tried to dissuade her from carrying into execution what he called "the absurd whim of a mystic"; but my mother urged my promise, and there had been warm words between them, as my mother told me—adding, however, "and the worst of it is, that scamp Wynne,

whom your uncle introduced into this house without my knowledge or sanction, was passing the door while your uncle was talking, and if he did not hear every word about the jewelled cross, drink must have stupefied him indeed. *He* is my only fear in connection with the jewels." Her dislike of Wynne had made her forget for the moment the effect her words must have upon me.

"Mother," I said, "your persistent prejudice and injustice towards this man astonish me. Wynne, though poor and degraded now, is a gentleman born, and is no more likely to violate a tomb than the best Aylwin that ever lived."

I will not dwell upon the scene at the funeral. I saw my father's coffin placed in the crypt that spread beneath the deserted church. It was by the earnest wish of my father that he was buried in a church already deserted because the grip of the resistless sea was upon it. At this very time a large slice of the cliff behind the church was pronounced dangerous, and I perceived that new rails were lying on the grass ready to be fixed up, further inland than ever.

## VII.

My mother retired to her room immediately on our return to the house. My uncle stayed till just before dinner, and then left. I seemed to be alone in a deserted house, so still were the servants, so quiet seemed everything. But now what was this sense of undefined dread that came upon me and would not let me rest? Why did I move from room to room? and what was goading me? Something was stirring like a blind creature across my brain, and it was too hideous to confront. Why *should* I confront it? Why scare one's soul and lacerate one's heart at every dark fear that peeps through the door of imagination, when experience teaches us that out of every hundred such dark fears ninety-nine are sure to turn out mere magic-lantern bogies?

The evening wore on, and yet I *would* not face this phantom fear, though it refused to quit me.

The servants went to bed quite early that night, and when the butler came to ask me if I should "want anything more," I said "only a candle," and went up to my bedroom.

"I will turn into bed," I said, "and sleep over it. The idea is a figment of an over-wrought brain. Destiny would never play any man a trick like that which I have dared to dream of. Among human calamities it would be at once the most shocking and the most whimsical—this imaginary woe that scares me. Destiny is merciless, but who ever heard of Destiny playing mere cruel practical jokes upon man? Up to now the Fates have never set up as humourists. Now, for a man to love, to dote upon, a girl whose father is the violator of his own father's tomb—a wretch who has called down upon himself the most terrible curse of a dead man that has ever been uttered—*that* would be a fate too fantastically cruel to be permitted by Heaven—by any governing power whose sanctions were not those of a whimsical cruelty."

Yet those words of my mother's about Wynne, and her suspicions of him, were flitting about the air of the room like fiery-eyed bats.

The air of the room—ah! it was stifling me. I opened the window and leant out. But that made matters a thousand times worse, for the moon was now at the very full, and staring across—staring at what?—staring across the sea at the tall tower of the old church on the cliff, where perhaps the sin—the "unpardonable sin," according to Cymric ideas—of sacrilege—sacrilege committed by *her* father upon the grave of mine—might at this moment be going on. The body of the church was hidden from me by the intervening trees, and nothing but the tall tower shone in the silver light. So intently did the moon stare at it, that it seemed to me that the inside of the church, with its silent aisles, arches, and tombs, was reflected on her disc. The moon oppressed me, and when I turned my eyes away I seemed to see hanging in the air the silent aisles of a church, through whose windows the moonlight was pouring, flooding them with a radiance more ghastly than darkness, concentrating all its light on the chancel, beneath which I knew that my father was lying in the dark crypt with a cross on his breast. I turned for relief to look in the room, and there, in the darkness made by the shadow of the bed, I seemed to read, written in pale, trembling flame, the words:

"LET THERE BE NO MAN TO PITY HIM, NOR TO HAVE COMPASSION UPON HIS FATHERLESS CHILDREN. . . . LET

HIS CHILDREN BE VAGABONDS, AND BEG THEIR BREAD: LET THEM SEEK IT ALSO OUT OF DESOLATE PLACES."

I returned to the window for relief from the bedroom.

"Now, let me calmly consider the case in all its bearings," I said to myself, drawing a chair to the window and sitting down with my elbows resting on the sill. "Suppose Wynne really did overhear the altercation between my mother and my uncle, which seems scarcely probable, has drink really so demoralized him, so brutalized him, that for drink he would commit the crime of sacrilege? There are no signs of his having sunk so low as that. But suppose the crime *were* committed, what then? Do I really believe that the curse of my father and of the Psalmist would fall upon Winifred's pure and innocent head? Certainly not. I do not believe in the effect of curses at all. I do not believe in any supernatural interference with the natural laws of the universe."

Ah! but this thought about the futility of the curse, about the folly of my father's superstitions, brought me no comfort. I knew that, brave as Winifred was as a child, she was, when confronting the material world, very superstitious. I remembered that as a child, whenever I said, "What a happy day it has been!" she would not rest until she had made me add, "and shall have many more," because of her feeling of the prophetic power of words. I knew that the superstitions of the Welsh hills awed her. I knew that it had been her lot to imbibe, not only Celtic, but Romany superstitions. I knew that the tribe of Gypsies with whom she had been thrown into contact, the Lovells and the Boswells, though superior to the rest of the Romany race, are the most superstitious of all, and that Winifred had become an object of strong affection to the most superstitious even among that tribe, one Sinfi Lovell. I knew from something that had once fallen from her as a child on the sands, when prattling about Sinfi Lovell and Rhona Boswell, that especially powerful with her was the idea (both Romany and Celtic) about the effect of a dead man's curse. I knew that this idea had a dreadful fascination for her—the fascination of repulsion. I knew also that reason may strive with superstition as with the other instincts, but it will strive in vain. I knew that it would have been worse than idle for me to say to Winifred, "There is no curse in the matter. The dreaming mystic who begot and forgot me, what curse could he call down on

a soul like my Winifred's?" Her reason might partly accept my arguments; but straightway they would be spurned by her instincts and her traditional habits of thought. The terrible voice of the Psalmist would hush every other sound. Her sweet soul would pine under the blazing fire of a curse, real or imaginary; her life would be henceforth but a bitter penance. Like the girl in Coleridge's poem of "The Three Graves," her very flesh would waste before the fires of her imagination.

"No," said I, "such a calamity as this which I dread Heaven would not permit. So cruel a joke as this Hell itself would not have the heart to play."

* * * * * *

My meditations were interrupted by a sound, and then by a sensation such as I cannot describe. Whence came that shriek? It was like a shriek coming from a distance—loud *there*, faint *here*, and yet it seemed to come from *me!* It was as though *I* were witnessing some dreadful sight unutterable and intolerable. And then it semed the voice of Winifred, and then it seemed her father's voice, and finally it seemed the voice of my own father struggling in his tomb. My horror stopped the pulses of my heart for a moment, and then it passed.

"It comes from the church or from behind the church," I said, as the shriek was followed by an angry murmur as of muffled thunder. All had occurred within the space of half a second. I quickly but cautiously opened my bedroom door, extinguishing my light before doing so, and began to creep downstairs, fearing to wake my mother. My shoes creaked, so I took them off and carried them. Crossing the hall, I softly drew the bolts of the front door; then I passed into the moonlight. The gravel of the carriage-drive cut through my stockings, and a pebble bruised one of my heels so that I nearly fell. When I got safely under the shadow of the large cedar of Lebanon in the middle of the lawn, I stopped and looked up at my mother's window to see if she were a watcher. The blinds were down, there was no movement, no noise. Evidently she was asleep. I put on my shoes and hurried across the lawn towards the high road. I walked at a sharp pace towards the old church. The bark of a distant dog or the baa of a waking sheep was the only sound. When I reached the churchyard, I peered in dread

over the lich-gate before I opened it. Neither Wynne nor any living creature was to be seen in the churchyard.

The soothing smell of the sea came from the cliffs, making me wonder at my fears. On the loneliest coast, in the dunnest night, a sense of companionship comes with the smell of seaweed. At my feet spread the great churchyard, with its hundreds of little green hillocks and white gravestones, sprinkled here and there with square, box-like tombs. All quietly asleep in the moonlight! Here and there an aged headstone seemed to nod to its neighbour, as though muttering in its dreams. The old church, bathed in the radiance, seemed larger than it had ever done in daylight, and incomparably more grand and lonely.

On the left were the tall poplar trees, rustling and whispering among themselves. Still, there might be at the *back* of the church mischief working. I walked round thither. The ghostly shadows on the long grass might have been shadows thrown by the ruins of Tadmor, so quietly did they lie and dream. A weight was uplifted from my soul. A balm of sweet peace fell upon my heart. The noises I had heard had been imaginary, conjured up by love and fear; or they might have been an echo of distant thunder. The windows of the church no doubt looked ghastly, as I peered in to see whether Wynne's lantern was moving about. But all was still. I lingered in the churchyard close by the spot where I had first seen the child Winifred and heard the Welsh song.

I went to look at the sea from the cliff. Here, however, there was something sensational at last. The spot where years ago I had sat when Winifred's song had struck upon my ear and awoke me to a new life—*was gone!* "This then was the noise I heard," I said; "the rumbling was the falling of the earth; the shriek was the tearing down of trees."

Another slice, a slice weighing thousands of tons, had slipped since the afternoon from the churchyard on to the sands below. "Perhaps the tread of the townspeople who came to witness the funeral may have given the last shake to the soil," I said.

I stood and looked over the newly-made gap at the great hungry water. Considering the little wind, the swell on the North Sea was tremendous. Far away there had been a storm somewhere. The moon was laying a band of living light across the vast bosom of the sea, like a girdle. Only

a month had elapsed since that never-to-be-forgotten moonlight walk with Winifred. But what a world of emotion since then!

## VIII.

I WALKED along the cliff to the gangway behind Flinty Point, and descended in order to see what havoc the landslip had made with the graves.

I looked across the same moonlit sands where I had seen Winifred so short a time before, when I had a father. To my delight and surprise, there she was again. There was Winifred, walking thoughtfully towards Church Cove with Snap by her side, who seemed equally thoughtful and sedate. The relief of finding that my fears about her father were groundless added to my joy at seeing her. With my own dead father lying within a few roods of me I ran towards her in a state of high exhilaration, forgetting everything but her. With sympathetic looks for my bereavement she met me, and we walked hand-in-hand in silence.

After a little while she said: "My father told me he was very busy to-night, and wished me to come on the sands for a walk, but I little hoped to meet you; I am very pleased we have met, for to-morrow I am going to London."

"To London?" I said, in dismay at the thought of losing her so soon. "Why are you going to London, Winnie?"

"Oh," said she, with the same innocent look of business-like importance which, at our first meeting as children, had so impressed me when she pulled out the key to open the church-door, "I'm going on business."

"On business! And how long do you stay?"

"I don't stay at all; I'm coming back immediately."

"Come," I exclaimed, "there's a little comfort in that, at least. Snap and I can wait for one day."

"Good-night," said Winifred.

"Have you not seen the great landslip at the churchyard?" I asked, taking her hand and pointing to the new promontory which the *débris* of the fall had made.

"Another landslip?" said she. "Poor dear old churchyard, it will soon all be gone! Snap and I must have been far away when that fell. But I remember saying to him, 'Hark at the thunder, Snap!' and then I heard a sound like a shriek

that appalled me. It recalled a sound I once heard in Shire-Carnarvon."

"What was it, Winnie?"

"You've heard me when I was a little girl talk of my Gypsy sister Sinfi?"

"Often," I said.

"She loves me more than anybody else in the whole world," said Winifred simply. "She says she would lay down her life for me, and I really believe she would. Well, there is not far from where I used to live a famous cascade called the Swallow Falls, where the water drops down a chasm of great depth. If you listen to the noise of the cataract, you may hear mingled with it a peculiar kind of wail as from a man in great agony. It is said to be the wail of Sir John Wynn, of Gwydir, whose spirit is under a curse, and is imprisoned at the bottom of the falls on account of his cruelty and misdeeds on earth. On those rare nights when the full moon shines down the chasm, the wail becomes an agonized shriek. Once on a bright moonlight night Sinfi and I went to see these falls. The moonlight on the cascade had exactly the same supernatural appearance that it has now falling upon these billows. Sinfi sings some of our Welsh songs, and accompanies herself on a peculiar obsolete Welsh instrument called a crwth, which she always carries with her. While we were listening to the cataract and what she called the Wynn wail, she began to sing the wild old air. Then at once the wail sprang into a loud shriek; Sinfi said the shriek of a cursed spirit; and the shriek was exactly like the sound I heard from the cliffs a little while ago."

"I heard the same noise, Winnie. It was simply the rending and cracking of the poor churchyard trees as they fell."

She turned back with me to the water-mark to see the waves come tumbling in beneath the moon. We sauntered along the sea-margin again, heedless of the passage of time.

And again (as on that betrothal night) Winifred prattled on, while I listened to the prattle, craftily throwing in a word or two, now and then, to direct the course of the sweet music into such channels as best pleased my lordly whim,—when suddenly, against my will and reason, there came into my mind that idea of the sea's prophecy which was so familiar to my childhood, but which my studies had now made me despise.

The sea then threw up to Winifred's feet a piece of seaweed. It was a long band of common weed, that would in the sunlight have shone a bright red. And at that very moment —right across the sparkling bar the moon had laid over the sea—there passed, without any cloud to cast it, a shadow. And my father's description of his love-tragedy haunted me, I knew not why. And right across my life, dividing it in twain like a burn-scar, came and lay forever that strip of red seaweed. Why did my father's description of his own love-tragedy haunt me?

Before recalling the words that had fallen from my father in Switzerland, I was a boy: in a few minutes afterwards, I was a man with an awful knowledge of destiny in my eyes —a man struggling with calamity, and fainting in the grip of dread. My manhood, I say, dates from the throwing up of that strip of seaweed. Winifred picked up the weed and made a necklace of it, in the old childish way, knowing how much it would please me.

"Isn't it a lovely colour?" she said, as it glistened in the moonlight. "Isn't it just as beautiful and just as precious as if it were really made of the jewels it seems to rival?"

"It is as red as the reddest ruby," I replied, putting out my hand and grasping the slippery substance.

"Would you believe," said Winnie, "that I never saw a ruby in my life? And now I particularly want to know all about rubies."

"Why do you want particularly to know?"

"Because," said Winifred, "my father, when he wished me to come out for a walk, had been talking a great deal about rubies."

"Your father had been talking about rubies, Winifred—how very odd!"

"Yes," said Winifred, "and he talked about diamonds too."

"The Curse!" I murmured, and clasped her to my breast. "Kiss me, Winifred!"

There had come a bite of sudden fire at my heart, and I shuddered with a dreadful knowledge, like the captain of an unarmed ship, who, while the unconscious landsmen on board are gaily scrutinizing a sail that like a speck has appeared on the horizon, shudders with the knowledge of what the speck *is*, and hears in imagination the yells, and sees the knives, of the Lascar pirates just starting in pursuit. As I

took in the import of those innocent words, falling from Winifred's bright lips, falling as unconsciously as water-drops over a coral reef in tropical seas alive with the eyes of a thousand sharks, my skin seemed to roughen with dread, and my hair began to stir.

At first she resisted my movement, but looking in my eyes and seeing that something had deeply disturbed me, she let me kiss her.

"What did you say, Henry?"

"That I love you so, Winnie, and cannot let you go just yet."

"What a dear fellow it is!" she said; "and all this ado about a poor girl with scarcely shoes to her feet." Then, after an instant's pause, she said: "But I thought you said something very different. I thought you said something about a curse, and *that* scared me."

"Scared Winifred!" I said. "Fancy anything scaring Winnie, who threatens to hit people when they offend her."

"Ah! but I am scared," said she, "at things from the other world, and especially at a curse."

"Why, what do you know about curses, Winifred?"

"Oh, a good deal. I have never forgotten that shriek of a cursed spirit which I heard at the Swallow Falls. And only a short time ago Sinfi Lovell nearly frightened me to death by a story of a whole Gypsy tribe having withered, one after the other—grandfathers, fathers, and children—through a dead man's curse. But what is the matter with you, Henry? You surely have turned very pale."

"Well, Winnie," said I, "I *am* a little, just a little faint. After the funeral I could take no dinner. But it will be over in a minute. Let us go back a few yards and sit down upon the dry sand, and have a little more chat."

We went and sat down, and my heart slowly resumed its function.

"Let me see, Winnie, what we were talking about? About rubies and diamonds, I think, were we not? You said that when your father bade you come out for a walk to-night, he had just been talking about rubies and diamonds. What was he saying about them, Winnie? But come and lay your head here while you tell me; lay it on my breast, Winnie, as you used to do in Graylingham Wood, and on these same sands."

Evidently the earnestness of my manner and the sup-

pressed passion in my voice drove out of her mind all her wise saws about the perils of wealth and all her wise determinations about the proposed betrothal, for she came and sat by my side and laid her head upon my breast.

"Yes, like *that*," I said; "and now tell me what your father was saying about precious stones; for I, too, take an interest in jewels, and have a great knowledge of them."

"My father," said Winifred, "is going to have some diamonds and rubies given to him to-night by a friend of his, a sailor, who has come from India, and I am to go to London to-morrow to sell some of them; for you know, dear, we are very poor. That is why I am determined to go back to Shire-Carnarvon and see if I can get a situation as a governess. Miss Dalrymple's recommendation will be of great aid. Poverty afflicts father more than it afflicts most people, and the rubies and diamonds and things will be of no use to us, you know."

I could make her no answer.

"It seems a very strange kind of present from my father's friend," she continued, meditatively; "but it is a very kind one for all that. But, Henry, you surely are still very unwell; your heart is thumping underneath my ear like a fire-engine."

"They are all love-thumps for Winifred," I said, with pretended jocosity; "they are all love-thumps for my Winnie."

"But of course," said she, "this is quite a secret about the precious stones. My father enjoined me to tell no one, because the temptation to people is so great, and the cottage might be robbed, or I might be waylaid going to London. But of course I may tell you; he never thought of *you*."

"No, Winnie, he never thought of me. You are very fond of him; very fond of your father, are you not?"

"Oh, yes," said she, "I love him more than all the world —next to you."

"Then he is kind to you, Winnie?"

"Ye—yes, as kind as he can be—considering——"

"Considering what, Winnie?"

"Considering that he's often—unwell, you know."

"Winnie," I said, as I gazed in the innocent eyes, "whom are you considered to be the most like, your father or your mother?"

"I never knew my mother, but I am said to be partly like her. Why do you ask?"

"Only an idle question. You love me, Winnie?"

"What a question!"

"And you will do what I ask you to do, if I ask you very earnestly, Winnie?"

"Certumly," said Winifred, giving, with a forced laugh, the lisp with which that word had been given on a now famous occasion.

"Well, Winifred, I told you that I feel an interest in precious stones, and have some knowledge of them. There are certain stones to which I have the greatest antipathy; diamonds and rubies are the chief of these. Now I want you to promise that diamonds and rubies and beryls shall never touch these fingers, these dear fingers, Winnie, which are mine, you know; they are mine now," and I drew the smooth nails slowly along my lips. "You are mine now, every bit."

"Every bit," said Winifred, but she looked perplexed.

She saw, however, by my face that, for some reason or other, I was deeply in earnest. She gave the promise. And I knew at least that those fingers would not be polluted, come what would. As to her going to London with the spoil, I knew how to prevent that.

But what course of action was I now to take? At this very moment perhaps Winifred's father was violating my father's tomb, unless indeed the crime might even yet be prevented. There was one hope, however. The drunken scoundrel whose daughter was my world, I knew to be a procrastinator in everything. His crime might, even yet, be only a crime in intent; and, if so, I could prevent it easily enough. My first business was to hurry to the church, and, if not yet too late, keep guard over the tomb. But to achieve this I must get quit of Winifred without a moment's delay. Now Winifred's most direct path to the cottage was the path I myself must take to the church, the gangway behind Flinty Point. Yet *she* must not pass the church with me, lest an encounter with her father should take place. There was but one course open. I must induce her to take the gangway behind the other point of the cove; and how was this to be compassed? That was what I was racking my brain about.

"Winifred," I said at last, as we sat and looked at the sea, "I begin to fear we must be moving."

She started up, vexed that the hint to move had come from me.

"The fact is," I said, "I particularly want to go into the old church."

"Into the old church to-night?" said Winifred, with a look of astonishment and alarm that I could not understand.

"Yes; something was left undone there this afternoon at the funeral, and I must go at once. But why do you look so alarmed?"

"Oh, don't go into the old church to-night," said Winifred.

I stood and looked at her, puzzled and strangely disturbed.

"Henry," said she, "I know you will think me very foolish, but I have not yet got over the fright that shriek gave me, the shriek we both heard the moment before the landslip. That shriek was not a noise made by the rending of trees, Henry. No, no; we both *know* better than that, Henry."

I gave a start; for, try as I would, I had not really succeeded in persuading myself that what I had heard was anything but a human voice in terror or in pain.

"What do you think the noise was, then?" said I.

"I don't know; but I know what I felt as it came shuddering along the sand, and then went wailing over the sea."

"What did you feel, Winnie?"

"My heart stood still, for it seemed to me to be the call from the grave."

"The call from the grave! and pray what is that? I feel how sadly my education has been neglected."

"Don't scoff, Henry. It is said that when the fate of an old family is at stake, there will sometimes come to him who represents it a call from the grave, and when I saw Snap standing stock still, his hair bristling with terror, I knew that it was no earthly shriek. I felt sure it was the call from the grave, and I knelt on the sands and prayed. Henry, Henry, don't go in the church to-night."

That Winifred's words affected me profoundly I need not say. The shriek, whatever it was, had been responded to by her soul and by mine in the same mysterious way. But the important thing to do was to prevent her from imagining that her superstitious terrors had affected me.

"Really, Winnie," I said, "this double-voiced shriek of yours, which is at once the shriek of the Welshman at the bottom of the swollen falls and the Celtic call from the grave, is the most dramatic shriek I ever heard of. It would

make its fortune on the stage. But with all its power of being the shriek of two different people at once, it must not prevent my going into the church to do my duty; so we had better part here at this very spot. You go up the cliffs by Needle Point, and *I* will take Flinty Point gangway."

"But why not ascend the cliffs together?" said Winifred.

"Why, the prying coastguard might be passing, and might wonder to see us in the churchyard on the night of my father's funeral (he might take us for two ghosts in love, you know). However, we need not part just yet. We can walk on a little further into the cove before our paths diverge."

Winifred made no demur, though she looked puzzled, as we were then much nearer to the gangway I had selected for myself than to the gangway I had allotted to her.

## IX.

Winifred and I were in the little horseshoe curve called "Church Cove," but also called sometimes "Mousetrap Cove," because, as I have already mentioned, a person imprisoned in it by the tide could only escape by means of a boat from the sea.

Needle Point was at one extremity of the cove and Flinty Point at the other. In front of us, therefore, at the very centre of the cliff that surrounded the cove, was the old church, which I was to reach as soon as possible. To reach a gangway up the cliff it was necessary to pass quite out of the cove, round either Flinty Point or Needle Point; for the cliff *within* the cove was perpendicular, and in some parts actually overhanging.

When we reached the softer sands near the back of the cove, where the walking was difficult, I bade Winifred good night, and she turned somewhat demurely to the left on her way to Needle Point, between which and the spot where we now parted she would have to pass below the church on the cliff, and close by the great masses of *débris* from the new landslip that had fallen from the churchyard. This landslip (which had taken place since she had left home for her moonlight walk) had changed the shape of the cove into a figure somewhat like the Greek *ε*.

I walked rapidly towards Flinty Point, which I should have to double before I could reach the gangway I was to take. So feverishly possessed had I become by the desire to prevent the sacrilege, if possible, that I had walked some distance away from Winifred before I observed how high the returning tide had risen in the cove.

When I now looked at Flinty Point, round which I was to turn, I saw that it was already in deep water, and that I could not reach the gangway outside the cove. It was necessary, therefore, to turn back and ascend by the gangway Winifred was making for, behind Needle Point, which did not project so far into the sea. So I turned back. As I did so, I perceived that she had reached the projecting mass of *débris* in the middle of the semicircle below the churchyard, and was looking at it. Then I saw her stoop, pick up what seemed a paper parcel, open it, and hold it near her face to trace out the letters by the moonlight. Then I saw her give a start as she read it. I walked towards her, and soon reached the landslip. Evidently what she read agitated her much. She seemed to read it and re-read it. When she saw me she put it behind her back, trying to conceal it from me.

"What have you picked up, Winifred?" I said, in much alarm; for my heart told me that it was in some way connected with her father and the shriek.

"Oh, Henry!" said she, "I was in hopes you had not seen it. I am so grieved for you. This parchment contains a curse written in large letters. Some sacrilegious wretch has broken into the church and stolen a cross placed in your father's tomb."

God!—It was the very same parchment scroll from my father's tomb on which was written the curse! I was struck dumb with astonishment and dismay. The whole terrible truth of the situation broke in upon me at one flash. The mysterious shriek was explained now. Wynne had evidently broken upon the tomb as soon as his daughter was out of the way. He had then, in order to reach the cottage without running the risk of being seen by a chance passenger on the Wilderness Road, blundered about the edge of the cliff at the very moment when it was giving way, and had fallen with it. It was his yell of despair amid the noise of the landslip that Winifred and I had both heard. My sole thought was for Winifred. She had read the curse; but

where was the dead body of her father that would proclaim upon whose head the curse had fallen? I stared around me in dismay. She saw how deeply I was disturbed, but little dreamed the true cause.

"Oh, Henry," said she, "to think that you should have such a grief as this; your dear father's tomb violated!" and she sat down and sobbed. "But there is a God in heaven," she added, rising with great solemnity. "Whoever has committed this dreadful crime against God and man will rue the day he was born:—the curse of a dead man who has been really wronged no penance or prayer can cure,—so my aunt in Wales used to say, and so Sinfi says;—it clings to the wrongdoer and to his children. That cry I heard was the voice of vengeance, and it came from your father's tomb."

"It is a most infamous robbery," I said; "but as to the curse, that is of course as powerless to work mischief as the breath of a baby." And again I anxiously looked around to see where was the dead body of Wynne, which I knew must be close by.

"Oh, Henry!" said she, "listen to these words, these awful words of your dead father, and the words of the Bible too."

And she held up to her eyes, as though fascinated by it, the parchment scroll, and read aloud in a voice so awe-struck that it did not seem to be her voice at all:

"*He who shall violate this tomb,—he who shall steal this amulet, hallowed as a love-token between me and my dead wife,—he who shall dare to lay a sacrilegious hand upon this cross, stands cursed by God, cursed by love, and cursed by me, Philip Aylwin, lying here. 'Let there be no man to pity him, nor to have compassion upon his fatherless children. . . . Let his children be vagabonds, and beg their bread: let them seek it also out of desolate places.'*—Psalm cix. *So saith the Lord.* Amen."

"I am in the toils," I murmured, with grinding teeth.

"What a frightful curse!" she said, shuddering. "It terrifies me to think of it. How hard it seems," she continued, "that the children should be cursed for the father's crimes."

"But, Winifred, they are NOT so cursed," I cried. "It is all a hideous superstition: one of Man's idiotic lies!"

"Henry," said she, shocked at my irreverence, "it *is* so; the Bible says it, and all life shows it. Ah! I wonder what

wretch committed the sacrilege, and why he had no pity on his poor innocent children!"

While she was talking, I stooped and picked up the casket from which the letters had been forced by the fall. She had not seen it. I put it in my pocket.

"Henry, I am so grieved for you," said Winifred again, and she came and wound her fingers in mine.

Grieved for *me!* But where was her father's dead body? That was the thought that appalled me. Should we come upon it in the *débris?* What was to be done? Owing to the tide, there was no turning back now to Flinty Point. The projecting *débris* must be passed. There was no dallying for a moment. If we lingered we should be caught by the tide in Mousetrap Cove, and then nothing could save us. Suppose in passing the *débris* we should come upon her father's corpse! The idea was insupportable. "Thank God, however," I murmured, "she will not even *then* know the very worst; she will see the corpse of her father who has fallen with the cliff, but she need not and will not associate him with the sacrilege and the curse."

As I picked up the letters that had been scattered from the casket, she said:

"I cannot get that dreadful curse out of my head; to think that the children of the despoiler should be cursed by God, and cursed by your father, and yet they are as innocent as I am."

"Best to forget it," said I, standing still, for I dared not move toward the *débris.*

"We must get on, Henry," said she, "for look, the tide is unusually high to-night. You have turned back, I see, because Flinty Point is already deep in the water."

"Yes," I said, "I must turn Needle Point with you. But as to the sacrilege, let us dismiss it from our minds; what cannot be helped had better be forgotten."

I then cautiously turned the corner of the *débris*, leading her after me in such a way that my body acted as a screen. Then my eyes encountered a spectacle whose horror chilled my blood, and haunts me to this day in my dreams. About twelve feet above the general level of the sand, buried to the breast behind a mass of greensward fallen from the graveyard, stood the dead body of Wynne, amid a confused heap of earth, gravestones, trees, shrubs, bones, and shattered coffins. Bolt upright it stood, staring with horribly

distorted features, as in terror, the crown of the head smashed by a fallen gravestone. Upon his breast glittered the rubies and diamonds and beryls of the cross, sparkling in the light of the moon, and seeming to be endowed with conscious life. It was evident that he had, while groping his way out of the crypt, slung the cross round his neck, in order to free his hands. I shudder as I recall the spectacle. The sight would have struck Winifred dead, or sent her raving mad, on the spot; but she had not turned the corner, and I had just time to wheel sharply round, and thrust my body between her and the spectacle. The dog saw it, and, foaming with terror, pointed at it.

"I beg your pardon, Winifred," I said, falling upon her and pushing her back.

Then I stood paralysed as the full sinister meaning of the situation broke in upon my mind. Had the *débris* fallen in any other way I might have saved Winifred from seeing the most cruel feature of the hideous spectacle, the cross, the evidence of her father's sacrilege. I might, perhaps, on some pretence, have left her on this side of the *débris*, and turning the corner, have mounted the heap and removed the cross gleaming in hideous mockery on the dead man's breast, and giving back the moonbeams in a cross of angry fire. One glance, however, had shown me that before this could be done there was a wall of slippery sward to climb, for the largest portion of the churchyard soil had broken off in one lump. In falling it had turned but *half* over, and then had slid down sideways, presenting to the climber a facet of sward nearly perpendicular and a dozen feet high. Wedged in between the jaggy top of this block and the wall of the cliff was the corpse, showing that Wynne had been standing by the fissure of the cliff at the moment when it widened into a landslip.

Nor was that all; between that part of the *débris* where the corpse was perched and the sand below was one of those long pools of sea-water edged by shingles, which are common features of that coast. It seemed that Destiny or Circumstance, more pitiless than Fate and Hell, determined on our ruin, had forgotten nothing.

The contour of the cove; the way in which the *débris* had been thrown across the path we now must follow in order to reach the only place of egress; the way in which the hideous spectacle of Wynne and the proof of his guilt had been

placed, so that to pass it without seeing it the passenger must go blindfold; the brilliance of the moon, intensified by being reflected from the sea; the fulness of the high tide, and the swell,—all was complete! As I stood there with clenched teeth, like a rat in a trap, a wind seemed to come blowing through my soul, freezing and burning. I cursed Superstition that was slaying us both. And I should have cursed Heaven but for the touch of Winnie's clasping fingers, silky and soft as when I first felt them as a child in the churchyard.

"What has happened?" asked she, looking into my face.

"Only a slip of my foot," I said, recovering my presence of mind.

"But why do you turn back?"

"I cannot bring myself to part from you under this delicious moon, Winnie, if you will stay a few minutes longer. Let us go and sit on that very boulder where little Hal proposed to you."

"But you want to go into the church," said Winifred, as we moved back towards the boulder.

"No, I will leave that till the morning. I would leave *anything* till the morning, to have a few minutes longer with you on the sands. Try to imagine that we are children again, and that I am not the despised rich man, but little Hal the cripple."

Winifred's eyes, which had begun to look very troubled, sparkled with delight.

"But," said she with a sigh, as we sat down on the boulder, "I'm afraid we sha'n't be able to stay long. See how the tide is rising, and the sea is wild. The tides just now. father says, come right up to the cliff in the cove, and once locked in between Flinty Point and Needle Point there is no escape."

"Yes, darling," I muttered to myself, drawing her to me and burying my face in her bosom, "there is *one* escape, only one."

For death seemed to me the only escape from a tragedy far, far worse than death.

If she made me any answer I heard it not; for, as I sat there with closed eyes, schemes of escape fluttered before me and were dismissed at the rate of a thousand a second. A fiery photograph of the cove was burning within my brain, my mind was absorbed in examining every cranny

and every protuberance in the semicircular wall of the cliff there depicted; over and over again I was examining that brain picture, though I knew every inch of it, and knew there was not in the cliff-wall foothold for a squirrel.

## X.

THE moon mocked me, and seemed to say:

"The blasting spectacle shining there on the other side of that heap of earth must be passed, or Needle Point can never be reached; and unless it is reached instantly you and she can never leave the cove."

"Then we will never leave it," I whispered to myself, jumping up.

As I did so I found for the first time that her forehead had been resting against my head; for the furious rate at which the wheels of thought were moving left no vital current for the sense of touch, and my flesh was numbed.

"Something has happened," she said. "And why did you keep whispering 'yes, yes'? Whom were you whispering to?"

The truth was that, in that dreadful trance, my conscience had been saying to me, "Have you a right to exercise your power over this girl by leading her like a lamb to death?" and my love had replied, "Yes, ten thousand times yes."

"Winifred," I said, "I would die for you."

"Yes, Henry," said she, "I know it; but what have we to do with death now?"

"To save you from harm this flesh of mine would rejoice at crucifixion; to save you from death this soul and body of mine would rejoice to endure a thousand years of hell-fire."

She turned pale, amazed at the delirium into which I had passed.

"To save you from harm, dear, I would," said I, with a quiet fierceness that scared her, "immolate the whole human race—mothers, and fathers, and children; I would make a hecatomb of them all to save this body of yours, this sweet body, alive."

But I could not proceed. What I had meant to say was this:—

"And yet, Winnie, I have brought you here to his boulder to die!"

But I could not say it—my tongue rebelled and *would* not say it.

Winifred was so full of health and enjoyment of life that, courageous as she was, I felt that the prospect of certain and imminent death must appal her; and to see the look of terror break over her face confronting death was what I could not bear. And yet the thing must be said. But at this very moment, when my perplexity seemed direst, a blessed thought came to me—a subterfuge holier than truth. I knew the Cymric superstition about "the call from the grave," for had not she herself just told me of it?

"I will turn Superstition, accursed Superstition itself, to account," I muttered. "I will pretend that I am enmeshed in a web of Fate, and doomed to die here myself. Then, if I know my Winifred, she will, of her own free mind, die with me."

"Winnie," I said, "I have to tell you something that I know must distress you sorely on my account—something that must wring your heart, dear, and yet it must be told."

She turned her head sharply round with a look of alarm that almost silenced me, so pathetic was it. On that courageous face I had not seen alarm before, and this was alarm for evil coming to *me*. It shook my heart—it shook my heart so that I could not speak.

"I felt," said she, "that something awful had happened. And it affects yourself, Henry?"

"It affects myself."

"And very deeply?"

"Very deeply, Winnie."

Then, pulling from my pocket the silver casket and the parchment scroll, I said, "It has relation to these."

"*That* I felt," said she; "how could it be otherwise? Oh, the miscreant! I curse him; I curse him!"

"Winifred," I said, "between me and this casket, and the cross mentioned in this scroll, there is a mysterious link. The cross is an amulet, an heirloom of dreadful potency for good and ill. It has been disturbed; it has been stolen from my father's grave, and there is but one way of setting right that disturbance. To avert unspeakable calamity from falling upon two entire families (the family of Aylwin and

that of her to whom this amulet was given) a sacrifice is demanded."

"Henry, you terrify me to death. What *is* the sacrifice? Oh God! Oh God!"

"My father's son must die, Winnie."

She turned ashen pale, but, struggling to be playful, she said: "I fear that the family of Aylwin and the family of somebody else must even take the calamity and bear it; for I don't mean my Henry to die, let me assure both families of *that*."

"Ah! but, Winnie, I am under a solemn oath and pledge to bear this penalty; and we part to-night. That shriek which so appalled you——"

"Well, well, the shriek?" said she, in a frenzy of impatience.

I made no answer, but she answered herself.

"That shriek was a call to you," she cried, and then burst into a passion of tears. "It *cannot* be," she said. "It cannot and shall not be; God is too good to suffer it." Then she fixed her eyes upon me and sobbed: "Ah! it is *true!* I feel it is all true! Yes, they are calling you, and that is why my soul answered the call. Ah, when I saw you just now lift your head from my breast with a face grey and wizened as an old man's—when I saw you look at me, I knew that something dreadful had happened. Oh, I knew, I knew! but I thought it had happened to *me*. The love and pity in your eyes when you opened them upon me made me think it was my trouble, and not yours, that disturbed you. And now I know it is yours, and you are going to die! They are calling you. Yes, you are going to let the tide drown you! Oh, my love! my love!" and her grief was so acute that I knew not at first whether in this I had done well after all.

"Winifred," I said, "you must bear this. I have always been ready to take death when it should come. I have at least had one blessed time with Winifred on the sands—Winifred the beloved and beautiful girl—one night, as the crown to the happy days that have been mine with Winifred the beloved and beautiful child. And that night, as we were walking by the sea, it seemed to me that such happiness as was ours can come but once—that never again could there be a night equal to that."

Smiles broke through her tears as she listened to me. I had struck the right chord.

"And *I* thought so too," she said. "It was indeed a night of bliss. Indeed, indeed God has been good to us, Henry," and she fell into my arms again.

"And now, Winnie," I said, "we must kiss and part—part for ever."

Yes, I had struck the right chord. As she lay in my arms I felt her soft bosom moving with a little hysterical laugh of derision when I said we must part. And then she rose and sat beside me upon the boulder, looking calm and fearless at the tide as it got nearer and nearer to Needle Point.

"Yes, dear," I said, looking in the same direction, "you must be going; see how the waves are surrounding the Point. You must run, Winnie—you must run, and leave me."

"Yes," said she, still gazing across to the Point, "as you say, I must run, but not yet, dear; plenty of time yet;" and she smiled to herself as she used to do in the old days, when as a child she had made up her mind to do something.

Then without another word she took her shawl from her shoulders, and pulled it out to see its length. And soon I felt her fingers stealing my penknife from my waistcoat-pocket, and saw her deftly cut up the shawl, strip after strip, and weave it and knot it into a rope, and tie the rope around her waist, and then she stooped to tie it around me.

It was when I felt her warm breath about my neck as she stooped over me to tie that rope, that love was really revealed to me; it was then, and not till then, that all my previous love for Winifred seemed as a flicker of a rushlight to Salámán's cloak of fire; and a feeling of bliss unutterable came upon me, and the night air seemed full of music, and the sky above seemed opening, as she whispered, "Henry, Henry, Henry, in a few minutes you will be mine." But the very confidence with which she spoke these simple words startled me as from a dream. "Suppose," I thought, "suppose my last drop of bliss with Winnie were being tasted now!" In a moment I felt like a coward. But then there came a loud crash and a thunder from behind the landslip.

"The settlement!" I cried. "The coming in of the tide has made the landslip settle!"

When I sat with closed eyes examining my fiery photograph, I had calculated the "settlement" at the return of the tide as being among the chances of escape. But feeling

myself to be engaged in a duel with Circumstance (more cruel than the fiends), I believed that the settlement would come too late for us, or even if it did *not* come too late, it might not hide away the spectacle. The settlement *had* come; what had it done for us? This I must know at once.

"Untie the rope," I said; "quick, untie the rope, there is a settlement of the landslip."

"But what has the settlement to do with us?" said Winnie.

"It *has* to do with us, dear; untie the rope. It has much to do with us, Winnie," I said; for now the determination to save her life came on me stronger than ever.

When the rope was untied I said, "Wait till I call," and I ran around the corner of the *débris*. The great unright wall of earth and sward, from which had stared the body of Wynne, had fallen, hiding him and his crime together!

To return round the corner of the landslip and call Winifred was the work of an instant, and, quick as she was in answering my call, by the time she had reached me I had thrown off my coat and boots.

"Now for a run and a tussle with the waves, Winnie," I said.

"Then we are not going to die?"

"We are going to live. Run; in six more returns of a wave like that there will be four feet of water at the Point."

"Come along, Snap," said Winifred, and she flew along the sands without another word.

Ah, she could run!—faster than I could, with my bruised heel! She was there first.

"Leap in, Winnie," I cried, "and struggle towards the Point; it will save time. I shall be with you in a second."

Winifred plunged into the tide (Snap following with a bark), and fought her way so bravely that my fear now was lest she should be out of her depth before I could reach her, and then, clad as she was, she would certainly drown. But never for a moment did her good sense leave her. When she was nearly waist-high she stopped and turned round, gazing at me as I tore through the shallow water—gazing with a wistful, curious look that her face would have worn had we been playing.

To get round the Point and pull Winifred round was no slight task, for the water was nearly up to my breast, and a woman's clothing seems designed for drowning her. Any other woman than Winifred *would* have been drowned, and

would have drowned me with her. But in straits of this kind the only safety lies in courage.

"What a night's adventures!" said Winifred, after we had turned the Point, and were walking through the shallow water towards the gangway.

We hurried towards the cottage as fast as our wet clothes would permit. On reaching it we found the door unlocked, and entered.

"Father has again gone to bed," said Winifred, "and left no candle burning for me."

And without seeing her face, I knew by the tremor of the hand I clasped that she was listening with shame for the drunken snore that she would never hear again.

I lighted a match, which with a candle I found on a chair.

"Your father is no doubt sound asleep," I said; "you will scarcely awake him to-night?"

"Oh dear, no," said Winifred. "Good-night. You look quite ill. Ever since you lifted up your head from my breast, when you were thinking so hard, you have looked quite ill."

Suddenly I remembered that I must be up and on the sands betimes in the morning, to see whether the tide had washed away the fallen earth so as to expose Wynne's body. To prevent Winifred from seeing the stolen cross was now the one important thing in the world.

I bade her good-night and walked towards home.

## XI.

She was right: those few minutes of concentrated agony had in truth made me ill. My wet clothes clinging round my body began to chill me now, and as I crept into the house and up-stairs to my room, my teeth were chattering like castanets.

As I threw off my wet clothes and turned into bed, I was partially forewarned by the throbbing at my temples, the rolling fire at the back of my eyeballs, the thirst in my parched throat, that some kind of illness, some kind of fever, was upon me. And no wonder, after such a night!

In that awful trance, when I had sat with my face buried on Winifred's breast, not only had the physiognomy of the cove, but every circumstance of our lives together, been

photographed in my brain in one picture of fire. When, after the concentrated agony of those first moments of tension, I looked up into Winifred's face, as though awakening from a dream, my flesh had "appeared," she told me, "grey and wizened, like the flesh of an old man." The mental and physical effects of this were now gathering around me and upon me.

From a painful slumber I awoke in about an hour with red-heat at my brain and a sickening dread at my heart. "It is fever," thought I; "I am going to be ill; and what is there to do in the morning at the ebb of the tide before Winifred can go upon the sands? I ought not to have come home at all," I said. "Suppose illness were to seize me and prevent my getting there?" The dreadful thought alone paralysed me quite. Under it I lay as under a nightmare. I scarcely dared try to get out of bed, lest I should find my fears well-grounded. At last, cautiously and timorously, I put one leg out of bed and then the other, till at length I felt the little ridges of the carpet; but my knees gave way, my head swam, my stomach heaved with a deadly nausea, and I fell like a log on the floor.

As I lay there I knew that I was indeed in the grasp of fever. I nearly went crazed from terror at the thought that in a few minutes I should perhaps lapse into unconsciousness and be unable to rise—unable to reach the sands in the morning and seek for Wynne's body—unable even to send some one there as a substitute to perform that task. But then whom was I to send? whom could I entrust with such a commission? I was under a pledge to my dead father never to divulge the secret of the amulet save to my mother and uncle. And, besides, if I would effectually save Winifred from the harm I dreaded, the hideous sacrilege committed by her father must be kept a secret from servants and townspeople. Whom then could I send on this errand? At the present moment, there were but four people in the world who knew that the cross and casket had been placed in the coffin—my mother, my uncle, myself, and now, alas! Winifred. My mother was the one person who could do what I wanted done. Her sagacity I knew; her courage I knew. But how could I—how dare I, broach such a matter to her? I felt it would be sheer madness to do so, and yet, in my dire strait, in my terror at the illness I was fighting with, I did it, as I am going to tell.

By this time the noise of my fall had brought up the servants. They lifted me into bed and proposed fetching our medical man. But I forbade them to do so, and said, "I want to speak to my mother."

"She is herself unwell, sir," said the man to whom I spoke.

"I know," I replied. "Call her maid and tell her that my business with my mother is very important, or I would not have dreamed of disturbing her; but see her I must."

The man looked dubious, but observing my wet clothes on a chair he seemed to think that something had happened, and went to do my bidding.

In a very short time my mother entered the room. I felt that my moments of consciousness were brief, and began my story as soon as we were alone. I told her how the sudden dread that Wynne would steal the amulet had come upon me; I told her how I had run down to the churchyard and discovered the landslip; I told her how, on seeing the landslip, I had descended the gangway and found the body of Wynne, the amulet, the casket, and the written curse. But I did *not* tell her that I had met Winifred on the sands. Excited as I was, I had the presence of mind not to tell her that.

As I proceeded with my narrative, with my mother sitting by my bedside, a look of horror, then a look of loathing, then a look of scorn, swept over her face. I knew that the horror was of the sacrilege. I knew that the loathing and the haughty scorn expressed her feelings toward the despoiler—the father of her whose cause I might have to plead; and I began to wish from the bottom of my heart that I had not taken her into my confidence. When I got to the finding of Tom's body, and the look of terror stamped upon his face, a new expression broke over hers—an expression of triumphant hate that was fearful.

"Thank God at least for that!" she said. Then she murmured, "But that does not atone."

Ah! how I regretted now that I had consulted her on a subject where her proud imperious nature must be so deeply disturbed. But it was too late to retreat.

"Henry," she said, "this is a shocking story you tell me. After losing my husband this is the worst that could have happened to me—the violation of his sacred tomb. Had I only hearkened to my own misgiving about the miscreant! Yet I wonder you did not wait till the morning before telling me."

"Wait till the morning?" I said, forgetting that she did not know what was at my heart.

"Doubtless the matter is important, Henry," said she. "Still, the mischief is done, the hideous crime has been committed, and the news of it could have waited till morning."

"But, mother, unless my father's words are idle breath, it is important, most important, that the amulet should again be buried with him. I meant to go to the sands in the morning and wait for the ebbing tide—I meant to take the cross from the breast of the dead man, and to replace it in my father's coffin. That, mother, was what I meant to do. But I am too ill to move; I feel that in an hour or so, or in a few minutes, I shall be delirious. And then, mother! Oh, *then!*——" My mother looked astonished at my vehemence upon the subject.

"Henry," she said, "I had no idea that you felt such an interest in the matter; I have certainly misjudged your character entirely. And now, what do you want me to do?"

"Nobody," I said, "must know of the cross but ourselves. I want you, mother, to do what *I* cannot do: I want you to go on the sands and wait for the turn of the tide; I want you to take the cross from Wynne's breast, if the body should be exposed, and secure it in secret until it can be replaced in the coffin."

"*I* do this, Henry?" said my mother, with a look of bewilderment at my earnestness. "Yet there is reason in what you say, and grievous as the task would be for me, I must consider it."

"But you will engage to do it, mother?"

"Really, Henry, you forget yourself,—you forget your mother too. For me to go down on the sands and watch the ebbing of the tide, and then defile myself by touching the body of this wretch, is a task I naturally shrink from. Still if, on thinking it over, I find it my duty to do it, it will not be needful for me to enter into a compact with my son that my duty to my dead husband shall be performed. Goodnight. I quite think you will be better in the morning. I see no signs myself of the fever you seem to dread, and, alas! I am not, as you know, ignorant of the way in which a fever begins."

She was going out of the room when I exclaimed, in sheer desperation: "Mother, I have something else to say to you. You remember the little girl, the little blue-eyed girl,

Wynne's daughter, who came here once, and you were so kind to her, so gracious and so kind;" and I seized her hand and covered it with kisses, for I was beside myself with alarm lest my one hope should go.

The sudden little laugh of bitter scorn that came from my mother's lips, the sudden spasm that shook her frame, the sudden shadow as of night that swept across her features, should at once have hushed my confession. But I went on: my tongue would not stop now: I felt that my eloquence, the eloquence of Winifred's danger, must conquer, must soften even the hard pride of her race.

"And she has never forgotten your graciousness to her, mother."

"Well?" said my mother, in a tone whose velvet softness withered me.

"Well, mother, she is in all things the very opposite of her father. This very night she told me"—and I was actually on the verge of repeating poor Winifred's prattle about her resembling her mother, and not her father (for already my brain had succumbed to the force of the oncoming fever, and the catastrophe I was dreading made of me a frank and confiding child).

"Well?" said my mother, in a voice softer and more velvety still. "What did she tell you?"

That tone ought to have convinced me of the folly, the worse than folly, of saying another word to her.

"But I can conquer her," I thought; "I can conquer her yet. When she comes to know all the piteousness of Winifred's case, she *must* yield."

"Yes, mother," I cried, "she is in all things the very opposite of Tom. She has such a horror of sacrilege; she has such a dread of a crime and a curse like this; she has such a superstitious belief in the power of a dead man's curse to cling to the delinquent's offspring, that, if she knew of what her father had done, she would go mad—raving mad, mother—she would indeed!" And I fell back on the pillow exhausted.

"Well, Henry, and is this what you summoned me from my bed to tell me—that Wynne's daughter will most likely object to share the consequences of her father's crime? A very natural objection, and I am really sorry for her; but further than that I have certainly no affair with her."

"But, mother, the body of her father lies beneath the

*débris* on the shore; the ebbing tide may leave it exposed, and the poor girl, missing her father in the morning, will seek him perhaps on the shore and find him—find him with the proof of his crime on his breast, and know that she inherits the curse—my father's curse! Oh, think of *that*, mother—think of it. And you only can prevent it."

For a few moments there was intense silence in the room. I saw that my mother was reflecting. At last she said:

"You say that Wynne's daughter told you something tonight. Where did you see her?"

"On the sands."

"At what hour?"

"At—at—at—about eleven, or twelve, or one o'clock."

I felt that I was getting into a net, but was too ill to know what I was doing. My mother paused for awhile; I waited as the prisoner tried for his life waits when the jury have retired to consult. I clutched the bed-clothes to stay the trembling of my limbs. On a chair by my bedside was my watch, which had been stopped by the sea-water. I saw her take it up mechanically, look at it, and lay it down again. In the agony of my suspense I yet observed her smallest movement.

"And in what capacity am I to undertake this expedition?" said she at length, in the same quiet tone, that soul-quelling tone she always adopted when her passion was at white heat. "Is it in the capacity of your father's wife executing his wishes about the amulet? Or is it as the friend, protectress and guardian of Miss Wynne?"

She sat down again by my bedside, and communed with herself—sometimes fixing an abstracted gaze upon me, sometimes looking across me at the very spot where in the shadow beside my bed I had seemed to see the words of the Psalmist's curse written in letters of fire. At last she said quietly, "Henry, I will undertake this commission of yours."

"Dear mother!" I exclaimed, in my delight.

"I will undertake it," pursued my mother in the same quiet tone, "on one condition."

"Any condition in the world, mother. There is nothing I will not do, nothing I will not sacrifice or suffer, if you will only aid me in saving this poor girl. Name your condition, mother; you can name nothing I will not comply with."

"I am not so sure of that, Henry. Let me be quite frank

with you. I do not wish to entrap you into making an engagement you cannot keep. You have corroborated to-night what I half suspected when I saw you talking to the girl in the churchyard; there is a very vigorous flirtation going on between you and this wretched man's daughter."

"Flirtation?" I said, and the incongruity of the word as applied to such a passion as mine did not vex or wound me; it made me smile.

"Well, for her sake, I hope it is nothing more," said my mother. "In view of the impassable gulf between her and you, I do for her sake sincerely hope that it is nothing more than a flirtation."

"Pardon me, mother," I said, "it was the word 'flirtation' that made me smile."

"We will not haggle about words, Henry; give it what name may please you, it is all the same to me. But flirtations of this kind will sometimes grow serious, as the case of Percy Aylwin and the Gypsy girl shows. Now, Henry, I do not accuse you of entertaining the mad idea of really marrying this girl, though such things, as you know, have been in our family. But you are my only son, and I *do* love you, Henry, whatever may be your opinion on that point; and, because I love you, I would rather, far rather, be a lonely, childless woman in the world, I would far rather see you dead on this floor, than see you marry Winifred Wynne."

"Ah! mother, the cruelty of this family pride has always been the curse of the Aylwins."

"It seems cruel to you now, because you are a boy, a generous boy. You think it the romantic, poetic thing to elevate a low girl to your own station—perhaps even to show your superiority to conventions by marrying the daughter of the miscreant who has desecrated your own father's tomb. But, Henry, I know the race to which you and I belong. In five years' time—in three years, or perhaps in two—you will thank me for this; you will say: 'My mother's love was not cruel, but wise.'"

"Oh, mother!" I said, "*any* condition but that."

"I see that you know what my condition is before I utter it. If you will give me your word—and the word of an Aylwin is an oath—if you will give me your word that you will never marry Winifred Wynne, I will do as you desire. I will myself go upon the sands in the morning, and if the

body has been exposed by the tide I will secure the evidence of her father's guilt, in order to save the girl from the suffering which the knowledge of that guilt would cause her, as you suppose."

"As I suppose!"

"Again I say, Henry, we will not quarrel about words."

I turned sick with despair.

"And on no other terms, mother?"

"On no other terms," said she.

"Oh, mercy, mother! mercy! you know not what you do. I could not live without her; I should die without her."

"Better die then!" exclaimed my mother, with an expression of ineffable scorn, and losing for the first time her self-possession; "better die than marry like that."

"She is my very life now, mother."

"Have I not said you had better die then? On no other terms will I go on those sands. But I tell you frankly what I think about this matter. I think that you absurdly exaggerate the effect the knowledge of her father's crime will have upon the girl."

"No, no; I do not. Mercy, dear mother, mercy! I am your only child."

"That is the very reason why you, who may some day be the heir of one of the first houses in England, must never marry Winifred Wynne."

"But I don't want to be the heir of the Aylwins; I don't want my uncle's property," I retorted. "Nor do I want the other bauble prizes of the Aylwins."

"Providence has taken Frank, and says you must stand where you stand," replied my mother solemnly. "You may even some day, should Cyril be childless, succeed to the earldom, and then what an alliance would this be!"

"Earldom! I'd not have it. I'd trample on the coronet. Gingerbread! I'd trample it in the mud, if it were to sever me from Winifred."

"You must succeed to it should Cyril Aylwin, who seems disinclined to marry, die childless," said my mother, quietly; "and by that time you may perhaps have reached man's estate."

"Pity, mother, pity!" I cried in despair, as I looked at the strong woman who bore me.

"Pity upon whom? Have pity upon me, and upon the family you now represent. As to all the fearful effects that

the knowledge of this sacrilege will have upon the girl, *that* is a subject upon which you must allow me to have my own opinion. God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and provides thick skins for the *canaille*. What will concern her chiefly, perhaps entirely, will be the loss of her father, and she will soon know of that, whether she finds the body on the sands or not. This kind of person is not nearly so sensitive as my romantic Henry supposes. However, my condition will not be departed from. If you consent to give up this girl I will go on the sands; I will defile my fingers; I will secure the stolen amulet at the ebb of the tide, should the corpse become exposed. If you will *not* consent to give her up, there is an end of the matter, and words are being wasted between us."

"Give up Winifred, mother? That is not possible."

"Then there is no more to be said. We will not waste our time in discussing impossibilities. And I am really so depressed and unwell that I must return to my room. I hope to hear you are better in the morning, and I think you will be. The excitement of this night and your anxiety about the girl have unstrung your nerves, and you have lost that courage and endurance which are yours by birthright."

And she left the room.

But she had no sooner gone than there came before my eyes the insupportable picture of a slim figure walking along the sands, stooping to look at some object among the *débris*, standing aghast at the sight of her dead father with the evidence of his hideous crime on his own breast; there came the sound of a cry to "Henry" for help! I beat my head against the bedstead till I was nearly stunned. I yelled and bellowed like a maniac: "Mother, come back!"

When she returned to my bedside my eyes were glaring so that my mother stood appalled, and (as she afterwards owned to me) was nearly yielding her point.

"Mother," I said, "I consent to your condition: I will give her up—but oh, save her! Let there be no dallying, let there be no risk, mother. Let nothing prevent your going upon the sands in the morning—early, quite early—and every morning at the ebbing of the tide."

"I will keep my word," she said.

"You will use the fullest and best means to save her?"

"I will keep my word," she said, and left the room.

"I have saved her!" I cried over and over again, as I sank back on my pillow. Then the delirium of fever came upon me, and I lay tossing as upon a sea of fire.

## XII.

WEAK in body and mind as an infant, I woke again to consciousness. Through the open window the sunlight, with that tender golden-yellow tone which comes with morning in England, was pouring between the curtains, and illuminating the white counterpane. Then a soft breeze came and slightly moved the curtains, and sent the light and shadows about the bed and the opposite wall—a breeze laden with the scent I always associated with Wynne's cottage, the scent of geraniums. I raised myself on my elbows, and gazed over the geraniums on the window-sill at the blue sky, which was as free of clouds as though it were an Italian one, save that a little feathery cloud of a palish gold was slowly moving towards the west.

"It is shaped like a hand," I said dreamily, and then came the picture of Winifred in the churchyard singing, and pointing to just such a golden cloud, and then came the picture of Tom Wynne reeling towards us from the church-porch, and then came everything in connection with him and with her; everything down to the very last words which I had spoken about her to my mother before unconsciousness had come upon me. But what I did *not* know—what I was now burning to know without delay—was what time had passed since then.

I called out "Mother!" A nurse, who was sitting in the room, but hidden from me by a large carved and corniced oak wardrobe, sprang up and told me that she would go and fetch my mother.

"Mother," I said, when she entered the room, "you've been?"

"Yes," said she, taking a seat by my bedside, and motioning the nurse to leave us.

"And you were in time, mother!"

"More than in time," said she. "There was nothing to do. I have realised, however, that your extraordinary and horri-

ble story was true. It was not a fever-dream. The tomb has been desecrated."

"But, mother, you went as you promised to the sands in Church Cove, and you waited for the ebb of the tide?"

"I did."

"And you found——"

"Nothing; no corpse exposed."

"And you went again the next day?"

"I did."

"And you found——"

"Nothing."

"But how many days have passed, mother? How many days have I been lying here?"

"Seven."

"And no sign of—of the body to be seen?"

"None. The wretch must have been buried for ever beneath the great mass of the fallen cliff. I went no more."

"Oh, mother, you should have gone every day. Think of the frightful risk, mother. On the very day after you ceased your visits the body might have been turned up by the tide, and she might have gone and seen it."

The picture was too terrible. I fell back exhausted. I revived, however, in a somewhat calmer mood. When my mother came into the room again, I returned at once to the subject. I reproached her bitterly for not having gone every day. She listened to my reproaches in entire calmness.

"It was idle to keep repeating these visits every day," said she, "and I consider that I have fully performed my part of the compact. I expect you to fulfil yours."

I remained silent, preparing for a deadly struggle with the only being on earth I had ever really feared.

"I have fully kept my word, Henry," said she, "and have done for you more than my duty to your father's memory warranted me in doing."

"But, mother, you did not do all that you promised to do; you did not prevent all risk of Winifred's finding it. She may find it even yet."

"That is not likely now. I have performed my part of the compact, and I expect you to perform yours."

"You did not use all means to save my Winifred from worse than death—from madness; you did not use all means to save me from dying of self-murder or of a broken heart;

and the compact is broken. Whether or not I could have kept my faith with you by breaking troth with her, it is you who have set me free. Mother," I said, fiercely, "in such a compact it must be the letter of the bond."

"Mean subterfuge, unworthy of your descent," said my mother quietly, but with one of those looks of hers that used to frighten me once.

"No, no, mother; you have not kept the letter of the bond, and I am free. You did *not* take the fullest and best means to save Winifred. Your compact was to save her from the risk I told you of. And, mother, mother, listen to me!" I cried, in a state of crazy excitement now: "in the darkest moment of my life, when I was prostrate and helpless, you were pitiless as Pride. Listen, mother: Winifred Wynne *shall* be mine. Not all the Aylwins that have ever eaten of wheat and fattened the worms shall prevent that. She shall be mine. I say, she shall be mine!"

"The daughter of the man who desecrated my husband's tomb!"

"And my father's! That man's daughter shall be my wife," I said, sitting up in bed and looking into those eyes, bright and proud, which had been wont to make all other eyes blink and quail.

"Cursed by your father, and cursed by God——"

"That curse—for what it may be worth—I take upon my own head; the curse shall be mine. Even if I believed the threat about the 'desolate places,' I would be there; if barefooted she had to beg from door to door, rest assured, mother, that an Aylwin would hold the wallet—would leave the whole Aylwin brood, their rank, their money, and their stupid, vulgar British pride, to walk beside the beggar."

The look on my mother's face would have terrified most people. It would have terrified me once. But in the frenzy into which I had then passed, nothing would have made me quail.

"Your services, mother, are no longer needed," I said. "Wynne's corpse might have been washed up by the tide, and your compact was to be there to see; but now, most likely, it is hidden, not under loose fragments as I had feared, but under the great mass of earth,—hidden for ever."

"But you forget," said my mother, "that the amulet has to be recovered."

"Mother," I said, in the state of wild suspiciousness concerning her and her motives into which I had now passed, "I know what your words imply,—that Winifred is not yet out of danger; the evidence of the curse and the crime can be dug up."

"I have no wish to harm the girl, Henry. You mistake me."

"Then, mother, we must *not* mistake each other in this matter," I said. "You have alluded to the word of an Aylwin. With me, as with the best of us, the word of an Aylwin is an oath. Wynne's corpse is now hidden; the cross is now hidden; I give you the word of an Aylwin that the man who digs up that corpse I will kill. I will not consider that he is an irresponsible agent of yours; I will kill him, and his blood shall be upon the head of her who sends him, knowing, to his death."

"And be hanged," said my mother.

"Perhaps. But after her father's crime has been exposed, the first thing for me is—to kill!"

"Why, boy, there's murder in your eyes!" said my mother, taken off her guard.

"Oh, mother, mother, can you not see that no wolf with a stolen lamb in its mouth was ever more pitilessly shot down by the owner of that lamb than any hireling wolf of yours would be shot down by me?"

"Boy, are you quite demented?"

"Listen, mother. To prevent Winifred from knowing that her father had stolen that amulet, and so brought down upon her the curse, I would have drowned her with myself in the tide. We sat waiting for the tide to drown us, when the settlement came at the last moment and buried it away from her. Is it likely that I should hesitate to kill a clodhopper, or a score, if only to take my vengeance on you and Fate? The homicide now will be yours."

She left, giving me a glance of defiance; but before our eyes ended that conflict, I saw which of us had conquered.

"Hate is strong," I murmured, as I sank down on my pillow, "and destiny is strong; but oh, Winnie, Winnie—stronger than hate, and stronger than destiny and death, is love. She knows, Winnie, that the life of the man who should dig up that corpse would not be worth an hour's purchase; she knows, Winnie, that in the court of conscience she alone is answerable now for what may befall; and you are safe!

But poor mother! My poor dear mother, whom once I loved so dearly, was it indeed you I struggled with just now? Mother, mother, was it you?"

This interview retarded my recovery, and I had a serious relapse.

The fever was a severe one. The symptoms were aggravated by these most painful and trying interviews with my mother, and by my increasing anxiety about the fate of Winifred. Yet my vigorous constitution began to show signs of conquering. Of Winifred I could learn nothing, save what could be gleaned from the servants in attendance, who seemed merely to have heard that Tom Wynne was missing, that he had probably fallen drunk over the cliff and been washed out to sea, and that his daughter was seeking him everywhere. As the days passed by, however, and no hint reached me that the corpse had been found on the sands, I concluded that, when the larger mass finally settled on the night of the landslip, the corpse had fallen immediately beneath it, and was buried under the main mass. Yet, from what I had seen of the corpse's position, in the rapid view I had of it, perched on the upright mass of sward, I did not understand how this could be.

And so anxiety after anxiety delayed my progress. Still, on the whole, I felt that the body would not now be dislodged by the tides, and that Winifred would at least be spared a misery compared with which even her uncertainty about her father's fate would be bearable. But how I longed to be up and with her!

Dr. Mivart, who attended me, a young medical man of much ability who had finished his medical education in Paris, and had lately settled at Raxton, came every day with great punctuality.

One day, however, he arrived three hours behind his usual time, and seemed to think that some explanation was necessary.

"I must apologise," said he, "for my unpunctuality today, but the fact is that, at the very moment of starting, I was delayed by one of the most interesting—one of the most extraordinary cases that ever came within my experience, even at the Salpêtrière Hospital, where we were familiar with the most marvellous cases of hysteria—a seizure brought on by terror in which the subject's countenance mimics the appearance of the terrible object that has caused

it. A truly wonderful case! I have just written to Marini about it."

He seemed so much interested in his case, that he aroused a certain interest in me, though at that time the word "hysteria" conveyed an impression to me of a very uncertain and misty kind.

"Where did it occur?" I asked.

"Here in your own town," said Mivart. "A most extraordinary case. My report will delight Marini, our great authority, as you no doubt are aware, on catalepsy and cataleptic ecstasy."

"Strange that I have heard nothing of it!" I said.

"Oh!" replied Mivart, "it occurred only this morning. Some fishermen passing below the old church were attracted, first by a shriek of a peculiarly frightful and unearthly kind, and then by some unusual appearance on the sands, at the spot where the last landslip took place."

My pulses stopped in a moment, and I clung to the back of my chair.

"What—did—the fishermen see?" I gasped.

"The men landed," continued Mivart,—too much interested in the case to observe my emotion,—"and there they found a dead body—the body of the missing organist here, who had apparently fallen with the landslip. The face was horribly distorted by terror, the skull shattered, and around the neck was slung a valuable cross made of precious stones. But the most interesting feature of the case is this, that in front of the body, in a fit of a remarkable kind, squatted his daughter—you may have seen her, an exceedingly pretty girl lately come from Wales or somewhere—and on her face was reflected and mimicked, in the most astonishing way, the horrible expression on the face of the corpse, while the fingers of her right hand were so closely locked around the cross——"

I felt that from my mouth there issued a voice not mine—a long smothered shriek like that which had seemed to issue from my mouth on that awful night when, looking out of the window, I had heard the noise of the landslip. Then I felt myself whispering "The Curse!" Then I knew no more.

## XIII.

I HAD another dangerous relapse, and was delirious for two days, I think. When I came to myself, the first words I uttered to Mivart, whom I found with me, were inquiries about Winifred. He was loth at first to revive the subject, though he supposed that the effect of his narrative upon me had arisen partly from my weakness and partly from what he called his "sensational way" of telling the story. (My mother had been very careful to drop no hint of the true state of the case.) At last, however, Mivart told me all he knew about Winifred, while I hid my face in my pillow and listened.

"In the seizures (which are recurrent) the girl," he said, "mimics the expression of terror on her father's face. Between the paroxysms she lapses into a strange kind of dementia. It is as though her own mind had fled and the body had been entered by the soul of a child. She will then sing snatches of songs, sometimes in Welsh and sometimes in English, but with the strange, weird intonation of a person in a dream. I have known something like this to take place before, but it has been in seizures of an epileptic kind, very unlike this case in their general characteristics. The mental processes seem to have been completely arrested by the shock, as the wheels of a watch or a musical box are stopped if it falls."

He could tell me nothing about her, he said, nor what had become of her since she had left his hands.

"The parish officer is taking his holiday," he added. "I mean to inquire about her. I wish I could take her to Paris to the Salpêtrière, where Marini is treating such cases by transmitting through magnetism the patient's seizure to a healthy subject."

"Will she recover?"

"Without the Salpêtrière treatment?"

"Will she recover?" I asked, maddened beyond endurance by all this cold-blooded professional enthusiasm about a case which to me was simply a case of life and death to Winnie and me.

"She may, unless the seizures become too frequent for

the strength of the constitution. In that event, of course, she would succumb. She is entirely harmless, let me tell you."

He told me that she was at the cottage, where some good soul was seeing after her.

"I will get up," I said, trying to rise.

"Get up!" said the doctor, astonished; "why do you want to get up? You are not strong enough to sit in a chair yet."

This was, alas! but too true, and my great object now was to conceal my weakness; for I determined to get out as soon as my legs could carry me, though I should drop down dead on the road.

I gathered from the doctor and the servants that the sacrilege had now become publicly known, and had caused much excitement. Wynne had evidently been slightly intoxicated when he committed it, and had taken no care to conceal the proofs that the grave had been tampered with. At the inquest the amulet had been identified and claimed by my mother.

It was some days before I got out, and then I went at once to the cottage. It was a lovely evening as I walked down Wilderness Road. It was not till I reached the little garden-gate that I began fully to feel how weak my illness had left me. The gate was half open, and I looked over into the garden, which was already forlorn and deserted. Some instinct told me she was not there. The little flower-beds looked shaggy, grass-grown, and uncared for. In the centre, among the geraniums, phlox-beds, and French marigolds, sat a dirty-white hen, clucking and calling a brood of dirty-white chickens. The box-bordered gravelled paths, which Wynne, in spite of his drunkenness, used to keep always so neat, were covered with leaves, shaken by the wind from the trees surrounding the garden. One of the dark green shutters was unfastened, and stood out at right-angles from the wall—a token of desertion. On the diamond panes of the upper windows, round which the long tendrils of grape-vines were drooping, the gorgeous sunset was reflected, making the glass gleam as though a hundred little fires were playing behind it. When I reached the door, the paint of which seemed far more cracked with the sun than it had looked a few weeks before, I found on knocking that the cottage was empty. I did not linger, but went at once into the town to inquire about her.

In place of giving me the information I was panting for, the whole town came cackling round me with comments on the organist and the sacrilege. I turned into the "Fishing Smack" inn, a likely place to get what news was to be had, and found the asthmatical old landlord haranguing some fishermen who were drinking their ale on a settle.

"It's my b'lief," said the old man, "that Tom was arter somethink else besides that air jewelled cross. I'm eighty-five year old come next Dullingham fair, and I regleck as well as if it wur yisterdy when resurrectionin' o' carpuses wur carried on in the old churchyard jes' like one o'clock, and the carpuses sent up to Lunnon reg'lar, and it's my 'pinion as that wur part o' Tom's game, dang 'im; and if I'd a 'ad *my* way arter the crouner's quest, he'd never a' bin buried in the very churchyard as he went and blast-phemed."

"Where would you 'a buried 'im, then, Muster Lantuff?" asked a fisher-boy in a blue worsted jerkin.

"Buried 'im? why, at the cross-ruds, with a hedge-stake through his guts, to be sure. If there's a penny agin' 'im on that air slate" (pointing to a slate hung up on the door) "there must be ten shillins, dang 'im."

"You blear-eyed, ignorant old donkey," I cried, coming suddenly upon him, "what do you suppose he could have done with a dead body in these days? Here's your wretched ten shillings,—for which you'd sell all the corpses in Raxton churchyard."

And I gave him half-a-sovereign, feeling, somehow, that I was doing honour to Winifred.

"Thankee for the money, Mister Hal, anyhow," said the old creature. "You was allus a liberal 'un, you was. But as to what Tom could 'a dun with the carpus, I'm allus heer'd that you may dew anythink *with* anythink, if you on'y send it carriage-paid to Lunnon."

I left the house in anger and disgust. No tidings could I get of Winifred in Raxton or Graylingham.

By this time I was thoroughly worn out, and obliged to go home. My anxiety had become nearly insupportable. All night I walked up and down my bedroom, like a caged animal, cursing Superstition, cursing Convention, and all the other follies that had combined to destroy her. It was not till the next day that the true state of the case was made known to me in the following manner: At the end of the town lived the widow of Shales, the tailor. Winifred and I

had often, in our childish days, stood and watched old Shales, sitting cross-legged on a board in the window, at his work, when Winifred would whisper to me, "How nice it must be to be a tailor!"

As I passed this shop I now saw that on the same board was sitting a person in whom Winifred had taken a still stronger interest. This was a diminutive imitation of the deceased, in the person of his hump-backed son, a little man of about twenty-four, who might, as far as appearance went, have been any age from twenty to eighty, with a pale anxious face like his mother's. He was stitching at a coat with, apparently, the same pair of scissors by his side that used to delight us two children. Standing by the side of the board, and looking on with a skilled intelligence shining from her pale eyes, was Mrs. Shales, with an infant in her arms—a wasted little grandchild wrapped in a plaid shawl, apparently smoking a chibouque, but in reality sucking vigorously at the mouthpiece of a baby's bottle, which it was clasping deftly with its pink little fingers.

Mrs. Shales beckoned me mysteriously into her shop, and then into the little parlour behind it, where she used to sit and watch the customers through the green muslin blind of the glass door, like a spider in its web. Young Shales, who left his board, followed us, and they then gave me some news that at once decided my course of action. They told me that one morning, after her frightful shock, Winifred had encountered Shales, who was taking a holiday, and employing it in catching young crabs among the stones. Winifred, who had a great liking for the humpbacked tailor, had come up to him and talked in a dazed way. Shales, pitying her condition, had induced her to go home with him; and then it had occurred to him to go and inquire at the Hall what suggestion could be made concerning her at a house where her father had been so well known. He could not see me; I was ill in bed. He saw my mother, who at once suggested that Winifred should be taken to Wales, to an aunt with whom, according to Wynne, she had been living. (No one but myself knew anything of Wynne's affairs, and my mother, though she had heard of the aunt, had not, as I then believed, heard of her death.) She proposed that Shales himself should contrive to take Winifred to Wales. "She had reasons," she said, "for wishing that Winifred should not be handed over to the local parish officer." She offered to pay

Shales liberally for going. *I*, however, was to know nothing of this. Her object, of course, was to get Winifred out of my way. The aunt's address was furnished by a Mr. Lacon of Dullingham, an old friend of Wynne's, who also, it seems, was ignorant of the aunt's death. This aunt, a sister of Winifred's mother, named Davies, the widow of a sea captain who had once known better days, resided in an old cottage between Bettws y Coed and Capel Curig. Shales had found no difficulty in persuading Winifred to go with him, for she had now sunk into a condition of dazed stupor, and was very docile.

They started on their long journey across England by rail, and everything went well until they got into Wales, when Winifred's stupor seemed to be broken into by the familiar scenery; her wits became alive again. Then an idea seemed to seize her that she was pursued by me, as the messenger bearing my dead father's curse. The appearance of any young man bearing the remotest resemblance to me frightened her. At last, before they reached Bettws y Coed, she had escaped, and was lost among the woods. Shales had made every effort to find her, but without avail, and was compelled at last, by the demands of his business, to give up the quest. He had returned on the previous evening, and my mother had enjoined him not to tell me what had been done, though she seemed much distressed at hearing that Winnie was lost, and was about to send others into Wales in order to find her, if possible. Shales, however, had determined to tell me, as the matter, he said, lay upon his conscience.

On getting this news I went straight home, ordered a portmanteau to be packed, and placed in it all my ready cash. Before starting I sat down to write a letter to my uncle. On hearing of my movements, my mother came to me in great agitation. In her eyes there was that haggard expression which I thought I understood. Already she had begun to feel that she and she alone was responsible for whatsoever calamities might fall upon the helpless deserted girl she had sent away. Already she had begun to feel the pangs of that remorse which afterwards stung her so cruelly that not all Winnie's woes, nor all mine, were so dire as hers. There are some natures that feel themselves responsible for all the unforeseen, as well as for all the foreseen, consequences of their acts. My mother was one of these. I rose

as she entered, offered her a seat, and then sat down again. She inquired whither I was going.

"To North Wales," I said.

She stood aghast. But she now understood that grief had made me a man.

"You are going," said she, "after the daughter of the scoundrel who desecrated your father's tomb."

"I am going after the young lady whom I intend to marry."

"Wynne's daughter marry my only son! Never!"

I proceeded with my letter.

"I will write to your uncle Aylwin at once. I will tell him you are going to marry that miscreant's daughter, and he will disinherit you."

"In that case, mother," I said, rising from the table, "I need not trouble myself to finish my letter; for I was writing to him, telling him the same thing. Still, perhaps I had better send mine too," I continued. "I should like at least to remain on friendly terms with him, he is so good to me;" and I resumed my seat at the writing-table.

"Henry," said my mother, after a second or two, "I think you had better *not* write to your uncle; it might only make matters worse. You had better leave it to me."

"Thank you, mother, the letter is finished," I replied as I sealed it up, "and will be sent. Good-bye, dear," I said, taking her hand and kissing it. "You knew not what you did, and I know you did it for the best."

"When do you return, Henry?" asked she, in a conquered and sad tone, that caused me many a pang to remember afterwards.

"That is altogether uncertain," I answered. "I go to follow Winifred. If I find her alive I shall marry her, if she will marry me, unless permanent insanity prove a barrier. If she is dead"—(I restrained myself from saying aloud what I said to myself)—"I shall still follow her."

"The daughter of the scoundrel!" she murmured, her lips grey with suppressed passion.

"Mother," I said, "let us not part in anger. The sword of Fate is between us. When I was at school I made a certain vow. The vow was that I would woo and win but one woman upon earth—the daughter of the man who has since violated my father's tomb. I have lately made a second vow, that, until she is found, I shall devote my life to the

quest of Winifred Wynne. If you think that I am likely to be deterred by fears of being disinherited by your family, open and read my letter to my uncle. I have there told him whom I intend to marry."

"Mad, mad boy!" said my mother. "Society will——"

"You have once or twice before mentioned society, mother. If I find Winifred Wynne, I shall assuredly marry her, unless prevented by the one obstacle I have mentioned. If I marry her I shall, if it so please me and her, take her into society."

"Into society!" she replied, with ineffable scorn.

"And I shall say to society, 'Here is my wife.' "

"And when society asks who *is* your wife?"

"I shall reply, 'She is the daughter of the drunken organist who desecrated my father's tomb, though that concerns you not:—her own specialty, as you see, is that she is the flower of all girlhood.' "

"And when society rejects this earthly paragon?"

"Then I shall reject society."

"Reject society, boy!" said my mother. "Why, Cyril Aylwin himself, the bohemian painter who has done his best to cheapen and vulgarise our name, is not a more reckless, lawless leveller than you. And, good heavens! to him, and perhaps afterwards to you, will come—the coronet."

And she left the room.

# III.

# Winifred's Dukkeripen

# III.—WINIFRED'S DUKKERIPEN

## I.

I NEED not describe my journey to North Wales. On reaching Bettws y Coed I turned into the hotel there—"The Royal Oak"—famished; for, as fast as trains could carry me, I had travelled right across England, leaving rest and meals to chance. I found the hotel full of English painters, whom the fine summer had attracted thither as usual. The landlord got me a bed in the village. A six-o'clock *table d'hôte* was going on when I arrived, and I joined it. Save myself, the guests were, I think, landscape painters to a man. They had been sketching in the neighbourhood. I thought I had never met so genial and good-natured a set of men, and I have since often wondered what they thought of me, who met such courteous and friendly advances as they made towards me in a temper that must have seemed to them morose or churlish and stupid. Before the dinner was over another tourist entered—a fresh-complexioned young Englishman in spectacles, who, sitting next to me, did at length, by force of sheer good humour, contrive to get into a desultory kind of conversation with me, and, as far as I remember, he talked well. He was not an artist, I found, but an amateur geologist and antiquary. His hobby was not like that fatal antiquarianism of my father's, which had worked so much mischief, but the harmless quest of flint implements. His talk about his collection of flints, however, sent my mind off to Flinty Point and the never-to-be-forgotten flint-built walls of Raxton church. After dinner, coffee, liquors and tobacco being introduced into the dining-room, I got up, intending to roam about outside the hotel till bedtime; but the rain, I found, was falling in torrents. I was compelled to return to my friend of the "flints." At that moment one of the artists plunged into a comic song, and

by the ecstatic look of the company I knew that a purgatorial time was before me. I resigned myself to my fate. Song followed song, until at last even my friend of the flints struck up the ballad of *Little Billee*, whose lugubrious refrain seemed to "set the table in a roar"; but to me it will always be associated with sickening heart-ache.

As soon as the rain ceased I left the hotel and went to the room in the little town the landlord had engaged for me. There, with the roar in my ears of the mountain streams (swollen by the rains), I went to bed and, strange to say, slept.

Next morning I rose early, breakfasted at "The Royal Oak" as soon as I could get attended to, and proceeded in the direction in which, according to what I had gathered from various sources, Mrs. Davies had lived. This led me through a valley and by the side of a stream, whose cascades I succeeded, after many efforts, in crossing. After a while, however, I found that I had taken a wrong track, and was soon walking in the contrary direction. I will not describe that long dreary walk in a drenching rain, with nothing but the base of the mountain visible, all else being lost in clouds and mist.

After blundering through marshy and boggy hillocks for miles, I found myself at last in the locality indicated to me. Arriving at a roadside public-house, I entered it, and on inquiry was vexed to find that I had again been misdirected. I slept there, and in the morning started again on my quest. I was now a long way off my destination, but had at least the satisfaction of knowing that I was on the right road at last. In the afternoon I reached another wayside inn, very similar to that in which I had slept. I walked up at once to the landlord (a fat little Englishman who looked like a Welshman, with black eyes and a head of hair like a black door-mat), and asked him if he had known Mrs. Davies. He said he had, but seemed anxious to assure me that he was a Chester man and "not a Taffy." She had died, he told me, not long since. But he had known more of her niece, Winifred Wynne (or, as most people called her, Winifred Davies); for, said he, "she was a queer kind of outdoor creature that everybody knew,—as fond of the rain and mist as sensible folk are fond of sunshine."

"Where did she live?" I inquired.

"You must have passed the very door," said the man.

And then he indicated a pretty little cottage by the roadside which I had passed, not far from the lake. Mrs. Davies (he told me) had lived there with her niece till the aunt died.

"Then you knew Winifred Wynne?" I said. There was to me a romantic kind of interest about a man who had seen Winifred in Wales.

"Knew her well," said he. "She was a Carnarvon gal—tremenjus fond o' the sea—and a rare pretty gal she was."

"Pretty gal she *is*, you might ha' said, Mr. Blyth," a woman's voice exclaimed from the settle beneath the window. "She's about in these parts at this very moment, though Jim Burton says it's her ghose. But do ghoses eat and drink? that's what *I* want to know. Besides, if anybody's like to know the difference between Winnie Wynne and Winnie Wynne's ghose, I should say it's most likely me."

I turned round. A Gypsy girl, dressed in fine Gypsy costume, very dark but very handsome, was sitting on a settle drinking from a pot of ale, and nursing an instrument of the violin kind, which she was fondling as though it were a baby. She was quite young, not above eighteen years of age, slender, graceful—remarkably so, even for a Gypsy girl. Her hair, which was not so much coal-black as blue-black, was plaited in the old-fashioned Gypsy way, in little plaits that looked almost as close as plaited straw, and as it was of an unusually soft and fine texture for a Gypsy, the plaits gave it a lustre quite unlike that which unguents can give. As she sat there, one leg thrown over the other, displaying a foot which, even in the heavy nailed boots, would have put to shame the finest foot of the finest English lady I have ever seen, I could discern that she was powerful and tall; her bosom, gently rising and falling beneath the layers of scarlet and yellow and blue handkerchiefs, which filled up the space the loose-fitting gown of bright merino left open, was of a breadth fully worthy of her height. A silk handkerchief of deep blood-red colour was bound round her head, not in the modern Gypsy fashion, but more like an Oriental turban. From each ear was suspended a massive ring of red gold. Round her beautiful, towering, tanned neck was a thrice-twisted necklace of half-sovereigns and amber and red coral. She looked me full in the face. Then came a something in the girl's eyes the like of which I had seen in no other Gypsy's eyes, though I had known well the

Gypsies who used to camp near Rington Manor, not far from Raxton, for my kinsman, Percy Aylwin, the poet, had lately fallen in love with Winnie's early friend, Rhona Boswell. It was not exactly an "uncanny" expression, yet it suggested a world quite other than this. It was an expression such as one might expect to see in a "budding spae-wife," or in a Roman Sibyl. And whose expression was it that it now reminded me of? But the remarkable thing was that this expression was intermittent; it came and went like the shadows the fleeting clouds cast along the sunlit grass. Then it was followed by a look of steady self-reliance and daring. The last variation of expression was what now suddenly came into her eyes as she said, scrutinising me from head to foot:

"Reia, you make a good git-up for a Romany-chal. Can you rokkra Romanes? No, I see you can't. I should ha' took you for the right sort. I should ha' begun the Romany rokkerpen with you, only you ain't got the Romany glime in your eyes. It's a pity he ain't got the Romany glime, ain't it, Jim?"

She turned to a young Gypsy fellow who was sitting at the other end of the settle, drinking also from a pot of ale, and smoking a cutty pipe.

"Don't ax me about no mumply Gorgio's eyes," muttered the man, striking the leather legging of his right leg with a silver-headed whip he carried. "You're allus a-takin' intrust in the Gorgios, and yet you're 'allus a-makin' believe as you hate 'em."

"You say Winifred Wynne is back again?" I cried in an eager voice.

"That's just what I *did* say, and I ain't deaf, my rei. How she managed to get back here puzzles me, poor thing, for she's jist for all the world like Rhona's daddy's daddy, Opi Bozzell, what buried his wits in his dead wife's coffin. She's even skeared at *me*."

"Why, you don't mean to say Winnie's back!" cried the landlord. "To think that I shouldn't have heard about Winnie Wynne bein' back. When did you see her, Sinfi?"

"I see her fust ever so many nights ago. I was comin' down this road, when what do I see but a gal a-kickin' at the door of Mrs. Davies's emp'y house, and a-sobbin' she was jist fit to break her heart, and I sez to myself, as I looked at her—'Now, if it was possible for that 'ere gal to be Wini-

fred Wynne, she'd be Winifred Wynne, but as it *ain't* possible for her to be Winifred Wynne, it *ain't* Winifred Wynne, and any mumply Gorgie* as *ain't* Winifred Wynne may kick and sob for a blue moon for all me.' "

"But it *was* Winnie Wynne, I s'pose?" said the landlord, in a state now of great curiosity.

"It *was* Winnie Wynne," replied the Gypsy, handing her companion her empty beer-pot, and pointing to the landlord as a sign that the man was to pass it on to him to be refilled. "Up I goes to her and I says, 'Why, sister, who's been a-meddlin' with you? I'll tear the windpipe out o' anybody wot's been a-meddlin' with you."

When the girl used the word "sister" a light broke in upon me.

"Are you Sinfi Lovell?" I cried.

"That's jist my name, my rei; but as I said afore, I ain't deaf. Jist let Jim pass my beer across and don't interrup' me, please."

"Don't rile her, sir," whispered the landlord to me; "she's got the real witch's eye, and can do you a mischief in a twink, if she likes. She's a good sort, though, for all that."

"What are you two a-whisperin' about me?" said the girl in a menacing tone that seemed to alarm the landlord.

"I was only tellin' the gentleman not to rile you, because you was a fightin' woman," said the man.

The Gypsy looked appeased and even gratified at the landlord's explanation.

"But what did Winnie Wynne do then, Sinfi?" asked the landlord.

"She turns round sharp," said the Gypsy; "she looks at me as skeared as the eyes of a hotchiwitchi† as knows he's a-bein' uncurled for the knife. '*Father!*' she cries, and away she bolts like a greyhound; and I know'd at onst as she wur under a cuss. Now, you see, Mr. Blyth, that upset me, *that* did, for Winnie Wynne was the only one on 'em, Gorgio or Gorgie, ever I liked. No offence, Mr. Blyth, it isn't your fault you was born one; but," continued the girl, holding up the foaming tankard and admiring the froth as it dropped from the rim upon her slender brown hand on its way to the floor, "Winnie Wynne was the only one on 'em, Gorgio or

* Gorgio, a man who is not a Gypsy. Gorgie, a woman who is not a Gypsy.

†Hedgehog.

Gorgie, ever I liked, and that upset me, *that* did, to see that 'ere beautiful cretur a-grinnin' and jabberin' under a cuss. The Romanies is gittin' too fond by half o' the Gorgios, and will soon be jist like mumply Gorgios themselves, speckable and silly; but Gorgio or Gorgie, she was the only one on 'em ever I liked, was Winnie Wynne; and when she turned round on me like *that*, with them kind eyes o' hern (such kind eyes *I* never seed afore) lookin' like *that* at me (and I know'd she was under a cuss)—I tell you," she said, still addressing the beer, "that it's made me fret ever since—that's what it's done!"

About the truth of this last statement there could be no doubt, for her face was twitching violently in her efforts to keep down her emotion.

"And did you follow her?" said the landlord.

"Not I; what was the good?"

"But what did you do, Sinfi?"

"What did I do? Well, don't you mind me comin' here one night and buyin' a couple of blankets off you, and some bread and meat and things?"

"In course I do, Sinfi, and you said you wanted them for the vans."

The Gypsy smiled and said, "I knowed she was bound to come back, so I pulls up the window and in I gets, and then opens the door and off I comes to you, as bein' the nearest neighbour, for the blankets and things, and I puts 'em in the house, and I leaves the door uncatched, and I hides myself behind the house, and, sure enough, back she comes, poor thing! I hears her kick, kick, kickin' at the door, and then I hears her go in when she finds it give way. So I waits a good while, till I think she's eat some o' the vittles and gone to sleep maybe, and then round the house I creeps, and in the door I peeps, and soon I hears her breathin' soft, and then I shuts the door and goes away to the place."*

"But why didn't you tell *us* all this, Sinfi?" asked the landlord. "My wife would ha' went and seen arter her, and we wouldn't ha' touched a farthin' for the blankets and things, not we, Sinfi, not we."

"Ah, you *would*, though," said the girl, "'cause I'd ha' *made* you take it. Winnie Wynne was the only one on 'em, Gorgio or Gorgie, ever I liked, and nobody's got no right to

*Camping-place.

see arter her only me, and that's why I'm about here *now*, if you *must* know; but nobody's got no right to see arter her only me, and nobody sha'n't nuther. They might go and skear her to run up the hills, and she might dash herself all to flactions in no time."

"Don't take on so, Sinfi," said the landlord. "When they are in that way they allus turns agin them as they was fond on."

"Then you noticed as she was fond o' me, Mr. Blyth," said the girl with great earnestness.

"Of course she was fond of you, Sinfi; every body knows that."

"Yes," said the girl, now much affected, "*every* body knowed it, *every* body knowed as she was fond o' me. And to see her look at me like *that*—it was a cruel sight, Mr. Blyth, I can tell you. Such a look you never seed in all your life, Mr. Blyth."

"Then I take it she's in the house now?" said the landlord.

"She goes prowlin' about all day among the hills, as if she was a-lookin' for somebody; and she talks to somebody as she calls the Tywysog o'r Niwl, an' I know that's Welsh for the 'Prince o' the Mist'; but back she comes at night. She talks to herself a good deal; and she sings to herself the Welsh gillies what Mrs. Davies larnt her in a v'ice as seems as if she wur a-singin' in her sleep, but it's very sweet to hear it. Yesterday I crep' near her when she was a-sittin' down lookin' at herself in that 'ere llyn where the water's so clear, 'Knockers' Llyn,' as they calls it, where her and me and Rhona Boswell used to go. And I heard her say she was 'cussed by Henry's feyther.' And then I heard her talk to somebody agin, as she called the Prince of the Mist; but it's herself as she's a-talkin' to all the while."

"Cursed by Henry's father! What curse could any superstitious mystic call down upon the head of Winifred? The heaven that would answer a call of that kind would be a heaven for zanies and tom-fools!" I shouted, in a paroxysm of rage against the entire besotted human race. "*That* for the curse!" I cried, snapping my fingers. "*I* am Henry, and I am come to share the curse, if there is one.'

"Young man," interposed the landlord, "such blaspheémous langige as that must not be spoke here; I ain't a-goin' to have *my* good beer turned to vinegar by blasphemin' them as owns the thunder, I can tell you."

But the effect of my words upon the Gypsy was that of a spark in a powder-mine.

"Henry?" she said, "Henry? are *you* the fine rei as she used to talk about? Are you the fine cripple as she was so fond on? Yes, Beng te tassa mandi if you ain't Henry his very self."

"Don't," remonstrated the landlord, "don't meddle with the gentleman, Sinfi. He ain't a cripple, as you can see."

"Well, cripple or no cripple, he's *Henry*. I half thought it as soon as he began askin' about her. Now, my fine Gorgio, what do you and your fine feyther mean by cussin' Winnie Wynne? You've jist about broke her heart among ye. If you want to cuss you'd better cuss me;" and she sprang up in an attitude that showed me at once that she was a skilled boxer.

The male Gypsy rose and buttoned his coat over his waistcoat. I thought he was going to attack me. Instead of this, he said to the landlord:

"*She's* in for a set-to agin. She's sure to quarrel with me if I interferes, so I'll just go on to the place and not spile sport. Don't let her kill the chap, though, Mr. Blyth, if you can anyways help it. Anyhows, *I* ain't a-goin' to be called in for witness."

With that he left the house.

The Gypsy girl looked at me from head to foot, and exclaimed:

"Lucky for you, my fine fellow, that I'm a duke's chavi, an' musn't fight, else I'd pretty soon ask you outside and settle this off in no time. But you'd better keep clear of Mrs. Davies's cottage, I can tell you. Every stick in that house is mine."

And, forgetting in her rage to pay her score, she picked up her strange-looking musical instrument, put it into a bag, and stalked out.

"She's got a queer temper of her own," said the landlord; "but she ain't a bad sort for all that. She's clever, too: she's the only woman in Wales, they say, as can play on the crwth now since Mrs. Davies is dead, what larnt her to do it."

"The crwth?"

"The old ancient Welsh fiddle what can draw the Sperrits o' Snowdon when it's played by a vargin. I dessay you've often heard the sayin' 'The sperrits follow the crwth.' She

makes a sight o' money by playin' on that fiddle in the houses o' the gentlefolk, and she's as proud as the very deuce. Ain't a bad sort, though, for all that."

## II.

That I determined to cultivate the acquaintance of Sinfi Lovell I need scarcely say. But my first purpose was to see the cottage. The landlord showed me the way to it. He warned me that a storm was coming on, but I did not let that stay me. Masses of dark clouds were gathering, and there was every sign of a heavy rain-storm as I went out along the road in the direction indicated.

There was a damp boisterous wind, that seemed blowing from all points of the compass at once, and in a minute I was caught in a swirl of blinding rain. I took no heed of it, however, but hurried along the lonely road till I reached the cottage, which I knew at once was the one I sought. It was picturesque, but had a deserted look.

It was not till I stood in front of the door that I began to consider what I really intended to do in case I found her there. A heedless impetuous desire to see her—to get possession of her—had brought me to Wales. But what was to be my course of action if I found her I had never given myself time to think.

If I could only clasp her in my arms and tell her I was Henry, I felt that she must, even in madness, know me and cling to me. I could not realise that any insanity could estrange her from me if I could only get near her.

I put my thumb upon the old-fashioned latch, and found that the door was not locked. It yielded to my touch, and with a throbbing of every pulse, I pushed it open and looked in.

In front of me rose a staircase, steep and narrow. There was sufficient evening light to enable me to see up the staircase, and to distinguish two black bedroom doors, now closed, on the landing. I stood on the wet threshold till my nerves grew calmer. On my right and on my left the doors of the two rooms on the ground floor were open. I could see that the one on my left was stripped of furniture.

I entered the room on my right—a low room of some considerable length, with heavy beams across the ceiling, which in that light seemed black. Two or three chairs and a table were in it. There was a brisk fire, and over it a tea-kettle of the kind much favoured by Gypsies, as I afterwards learnt. There was no grate, but an open hearth, exactly like the one in Wynne's cottage, where Winifred and I used to stand in summer evenings to see the sky, and the stars twinkling above the great sooty throat of the open chimney. I now perceived the crwth and bow upon the table. Sinfi Lovell had evidently been here since we parted. On the walls hung a few of those highly coloured prints of Scriptural subjects which, at one time, used to be seen in English farmhouses, and are still the only works of art with the Welsh peasants and a few well-to-do Welsh Gypsies who would emulate Gorgio tastes.

On the left-hand side of the room was an arched recess, in which, no doubt, had stood at one time a sideboard, or some such piece of furniture. There was no occupant of the room, however, and I grew calmer as I stood before the fire, which drew from my wet clothes a cloud of steam. The ruddy fingers of the fire-gleam playing upon the walls made the colours of the pictures seem bright as the tints of stained glass. The pathetic message of those flickering rays flowed into my soul. The red mantle of the Prodigal Son, in which he was feeding the swine, shone as though it had been soaked in sorrow and blood-red sin. The house was apparently empty; the tension of my passion became for the first time relaxed, and I passed into a strange mood of pathos, dreamy, but yet acute, in which Winifred's fate, and my mother's harshness, and my father's scarred breast, seemed all a mingled mystery of reminiscent pain.

I had not stood more than a minute, however, when I was startled into a very different mood. I thought I heard a sobbing noise, which seemed to me to come from some one overhead, some one lying upon the boards of the room above me. I was rooted to the spot where I stood, for the sob seemed scarcely human, and yet it seemed to be hers. A new feeling about Winifred's madness came upon me. I recalled Mivart's horrible description of the mimicry. My God! what was I about to see? I *dared* not turn and go upstairs; the fire and the singing tea-kettle were, at least, companions. But something impelled me to take the bow and

draw it across the crwth-strings. Presently I thought I heard a door over-head softly open, and this was followed by the almost inaudible creak of a light footstep descending the stairs. With paralysed pulses I kept my eyes fixed on the half-open door, in the certainty of seeing her pass along the little passage leading from the staircase to the front door. But as I heard the dear footsteps descend stair after stair my horror left me, and I nearly began to sob myself. My thoughts now were all for her safety. I slipped into the recess, fearing to take her by surprise.

Soon the slim girlish figure passed into the room. And as I saw her glide along I was stunned, as though I had not expected to see her, as though I had not known the footstep coming down the stairs.

With her eyes fixed on the fireplace, she brushed past me without perceiving me, took a chair, and sat down in front of the fire, her elbows resting on her knees, and her face meditatively sunk between her hands. Her sobbing had ceased, and unless my ears deceived me, had given place to an occasional soft happy gurgle of childish laughter.

I stepped out from the shelter of my archway into the middle of the room, dubious as to what course to pursue. I thought that, on the whole, the movement that would startle her least would be to slip quietly out of the room and out of the house while she was in the reverie, then knock at the door. She would arouse herself then, expecting to see some one, and would not be so entirely taken by surprise at the sight of my face as she would have been at finding me, without the slightest warning, standing behind her in the room. I did this: I slipped out at the door and knocked, gently at first, but got no answer; then a little louder—no answer; then louder and louder, till at last I thundered at the door in a state of growing alarm; still no answer.

"She is stone deaf," I thought; and now I remembered having noticed, as she brushed past me, a far-off gaze in her eyes, such as some stone-deaf people show.

I re-entered the house. There she was, sitting immovably before the fire, in the same reverie. I coughed and hemmed, softly at first, then more loudly, finally with such vigour that I ran the risk of damaging my throat, and still there was no movement of the head bent over the fire and resting in the palms of the hands. At last I made a step forward, then another, finally finding myself on the knitted

cloth hearthrug beside her. I now had the full view of her profile. That she should be still unconscious of my presence was unaccountable, for I stood at the end of the rug gazing at her. Again I coughed and hemmed, but without producing the smallest effect. Then I determined to address her; but I thought it would be safer to do so as a stranger than to announce myself at once as Henry.

"I beg pardon," I said, "but is there any one at home?"

No answer.

"Is this the way to Capel Curig?"

No answer.

"Will you give me shelter?" I said; and finally I gave a desperate "halloo."

My efforts had not produced the slightest effect. I was now in a state of great agitation. That she was stone deaf seemed evident. But was she not in some kind of fit, though without the contortions of face Mivart had described to me —contortions which haunted me as much as though I had seen them? I stooped down and gazed into her face. There was now no terror there, nor even sorrow. I could see in her eyes sparks of pleasure, as in the eyes of an infant when it seems to see in the air pictures or colours to which our eyes are blind. Round about her cheek and mouth a little dimple was playing, exactly like the dimple that plays around the mouth of a pleased child. This marvellous expression on her face recalled to me what Mivart had said as to the form her dementia assumed between one paroxysm and another.

"Thank God," thought I, "she's not in a fit; she's only deaf."

Driven to desperation, however, I seized her shoulder and shook it. This aroused her. She started up with violence, at the same time overturning the chair upon which she had been sitting. She stared at me wildly. The danger of what I had done struck me now. A fortunate inspiration caused me to say, "Tywysog o'r Niwl." Then there broke over her face a sweet smile of childish pleasure. She made a graceful curtsey, and said, "You've come at last; I was thinking about you all the while."

Shall I ever forget her expression? Her eyes were alive with light and pleasure. It was as though Winifred's soul had fled or the soul of her childhood had re-entered and taken possession of her body. But the witchery of her ex-

pression no words can describe. Never had I seen her so lovely as now. Often when a child I had seen the boatmen on the sands look at us as we passed—seen them stay in the midst of their toil, their dull faces brightening with admiration, as though a bar of unexpected sunlight had fallen across them. In the fields I had seen labourers, sitting at their simple dinner under the hedges, stay their meal to look after the child,—so winning, dazzling, and strange was her beauty. And when I had first met her again, a child no longer, in the churchyard, my memory had accepted her at once as fulfilling, and more than fulfilling, all her childhood's promise. But never had she looked so bewitching as now—a poor mad girl who had lost her wits from terror.

For some time I could only keep murmuring: "More lovely mad than sane!"

"As if I didn't *know* the Prince!" said she. "You who, in fine weather or cloudy, wet or dry, are there on the hills to meet me! As if I don't know the Prince of the Mist when I see him! But how kind of you to come down here and see poor Winnie, poor lonely Winnie, at home!"

She fetched a chair, placed it in front of the fire, pointing to it with the same ravishingly childlike smile, indicating that it was for me, and then, when she saw me mechanically sit down, picked up her chair and came and sat close beside me.

In a second she was lost in a reverie as profound as that from which I had aroused her; and the only sound I heard was the rain on the window and the fitful gusts of wind playing around the cottage.

The wind having blown open the door, I got up to shut it. Winifred rose too, and again taking hold of my hand, she looked up into my face with a smile and said, "Don't go; I'm so lonely—poor Winnie's so lonely."

As I held her hand in mine, and closed my other hand over it, I murmured to myself, "If God will only give her to me like this—mad like this—I will be content."

"Dearest," I said, longing to put my arm round her waist —to kiss her own passionless lips—but I dared not, lest I might frighten her away, "I will not leave you. I will never leave you. You shall never be lonely any more."

I closed the door, and we resumed our seats.

Can I put into words what passed within my soul as we two sat by the fire, she holding my hand in her own—hold-

ing it as innocently as a child holds the hand of its mother? Can I put into words my mingled feelings of love and pity and wild grief, as I sat looking at her and murmuring, "Yes; if God will only give her to me like *this*, I will be content"?

"Prince," said she, "your eyes look very kind!—Sweet, sweet eyes," she continued, looking at me. "The Prince of the Mist has love-eyes," she repeated, as she placed the seats before the fire again.

Then I heard her murmur, "Love-eyes! love-eyes! Henry's love-eyes!" Then a terrible change came over her. She sprang up and came and peered in my face. An indescribable expression of terror overspread her features, her nostrils expanded, her lips were drawn tightly over her teeth, her eyes seemed starting from their sockets; her throat suddenly became fluted like the throat of an aged woman, then veined with knotted, cruel cords. Then she stood as transfixed, and her face was mimicking that appalling look on her father's face which I had seen in the moonlight. With a yell of "Father!" she leapt from me. Then she rushed from the house, and I could hear her run by the window, crying, "Cursed, cursed, cursed by Henry's father!"

For an instant the movement took away my breath; but I soon recovered and sprang after her to the door.

There, in the distance, I saw her in the rain, running along the road. My first impulse was to follow her and run her down. But luckily I considered the effect this might have in increasing her terror, and stopped. She was soon out of sight. I wandered about the road calling her name, and calling on Heaven to have a little pity—a little mercy.

## III

I DECIDED to return to the house, but found that I had lost my way in the obscurity and pelting rain. For hours I wandered about, without the slightest clue as to where I was. I was literally soaked to the skin. Several times I fell into holes in a morass, and was up to my hips in moss and mud and water. Then I began to call out for assistance till I was hoarse. I might as well have called out on an uninhabited island.

The night wore on, and the darkness grew so intense that I could scarcely see my hand when I held it up. Every star in the heavens was hid away as by a thick pall. The darkness was positively benumbing to the faculties, and added, if possible, to the misery I was in on account of Winifred. Suddenly my progress was arrested. I had fallen violently against something. A human body, a woman! I thrust out my hand and seized a woman's damp arm.

"Winifred," I cried, "it's Henry."

"I thought as much," said the voice of the Gypsy girl I had met at the wayside inn, and she seized me by the throat with a fearful grip. "You've been to the cottage and skeared her away, and now she's seed you there she'll never come back; she'll wander about the hills till she drops down dead, or falls over the brinks."

"Oh God!" I cried, as I struggled away from her. "Winifred! Winifred!"

There was silence between us then.

"You seem mighty fond on her, young man," said the Gypsy at length, in a softened voice, "and you don't strike out at me for grabbin' your throat."

"Winifred! Winifred!" I said, as I thought of her on the hills in a night like this.

"You seem mighty fond on her, young man," repeated the girl's voice in the darkness.

But I could afford no words for her, so cruelly was misery lacerating me.

"Reia," said the Gypsy, "did I hurt your throat just now? I hope I didn't; but you see she was the only one of 'em ever I liked, Gorgio or Gorgie, 'cept Mrs. Davis, lad or wench. I know'd her as a child, and arterwards, when a fine English lady, as poor as a church-mouse, tried to spile her, a-makin' *her* a fine lady too, I thought she'd forget all about me. But not she. I never once called at Mrs. Davies's house with my crwth, as she taught me to play on, but out Winnie would come with her bright eyes an' say, 'Oh, I'm so glad!' She meant she was glad to see *me*, bless the kind heart on her. An' when I used to see her on the hills, she'd come runnin' up to me, and she'd put her little hand in mine, she would, an' chatter away, she would, as we went up and up. An' one day, when she heard me callin' one o' the Romany chies sister, she says, 'Is that your sister?' an' when I says, 'No; but the Romany chies calls each other sister,'

then says she, pretending not to know all about our Romany ways, 'Sinfi, I'm very fond of you, may *I* call you sister?' An' she had sich ways; and she's the only Gorgio or Gorgie, 'cept Mrs. Davies, as I ever liked, lad or wench."

The Gypsy's simple words came like a new message of comfort and hope, but I could not speak.

"Young man," she continued, "are you there?" and she put out her hand to feel for me.

I took hold of the hand. No words passed; none were needed. Never had I known friendship before. After a short time I said:

"What shall we do, Sinfi?"

"I shall wait a bit, till the stars are out," said she. "I know they're a-comin' out by the feel o' the wind. Then I shall walk up a path as Winnie knows. The sun'll be up ready for me by the time I get to the part I wants to go to. You know, young man, I *must* find her. She'll never come back to the cottage no more, now she's been skeared away from it."

"But I must accompany you," I said.

"No, no, you musn't do that," said the Gypsy; "she might take fright and fall and be killed. Besides," said she, "Winifred Wynne's under a cuss; it's bad luck to follow up anybody under a cuss."

"But *you* are following her," I said.

"Ah, but that's different. 'Gorgio cuss never touched Romany,' as my mammy, as had the seein' eye, used to say."

"But," I exclaimed, vehemently, "I *want* to be cursed with her. I have followed her to be cursed with her. I mean to go with you."

"Young man," said she, "are there many o' your sort among the Gorgios?"

"I don't know and I don't care," said I.

" 'Cause," said she, "that sayin' o' yourn is a fine sight liker a Romany chi's nor a Romany chal's. It's the chies as sticks to the chals, cuss or no cuss. I wish the chals 'ud stick as close to the chies."

After much persuasion, however, I induced the Gypsy to let me accompany her, promising to abide implicitly by her instructions.

Even while we were talking the rain had ceased, and patches of stars were shining brilliantly. Sinfi Lovell proposed that we should go to the cottage, dry our clothes, and

furnish ourselves with a day's provisions, which she said a certain cupboard in the cottage would supply, and also with her crwth, which she appeared to consider essential to the success of the enterprise.

"She's fond o' the crwth," she said. "She allus wanted Mrs. Davies to larn her to play it, but her aunt never would, 'cause when it's played by a maid on the hills to the Welsh dukkerin' gillie,* the spirits o' Snowdon and the livin' mullos† o' them as she's fond on will sometimes come and show themselves, and she said Winnie wasn't at all the sort o' gal to feel comfable with spirits moving round her. She larnt me it, though. It's only when the crwth is played by a maid on the hills that the spirits can follow it."

We did as Sinfi suggested, and afterwards began our search. She proposed that we should go at once to Knockers' Llyn, where she had seen Winifred the day before sitting and talking to herself. We proceeded towards the spot.

## IV.

The Gypsy girl was as lithe and active as Winifred herself, and vastly more powerful. I was wasted by illness and fatigue. Along the rough path we went, while the morning gradually broke over the east. Great isles and continents of clouds were rolled and swirled from peak to peak, from crag to crag, across steaming valley and valley; iron-grey at first, then faintly tinged with rose, which grew warmer and richer and deeper every moment.

"It's a-goin' to be one of the finest sunrises ever seed," said the Gypsy girl. "Dordi! the Gorgios come to see our sunrises," she continued, with the pride of an owner of Snowdon. "You know this is the only way to see the hills. You may ride up the Llanberis side in a go-cart."

Racked with anxiety as I was, I found it a relief during the ascent to listen to the Gypsy's talk about Winifred. She gave me a string of reminiscences about her that enchained, enchanted, and yet harrowed me. A strong friendship had already sprung up between me and my companion; and I

**Dukkerin' gillie*, incantation song.
†*Livin' mullos*, wraiths.

was led to tell her about the cross and the curse, the violation of my father's tomb and its disastrous consequences. She was evidently much awed by the story.

"Well," said she, when I had stopped to look around, "it's my belief as the cuss is a-workin' now, and'll have to spend itself. If it could ha' spent itself on the feyther as did the mischief, why all well an' good, but, you see, he's gone, an' left it to spend itself on his chavi; jist the way with 'em Gorgio feythers an' Romany daddies. It'll have to spend itself, though, that cuss will, I'm afeard."

"But," I said, "you don't mean that you think for her father's crime she'll have to beg her bread in desolate places."

"I do though, wusser luck," said the Gypsy solemnly, stopping suddenly, and standing still as a statue.

"And this," I ejaculated, "is the hideous belief of all races in all times! Monstrous if a lie—more monstrous if true! Anyhow I'll find her. I'll traverse the earth till I find her. I'll share her lot with her, whatever it may be, and wherever it may be in the world. If she's a beggar, I'll beg by her side."

"Right you are, brother," said the Gypsy, breaking in enthusiastically. "I likes to hear a man say that. You're liker a Romany chi nor a Romany chal, the more I see of you. What I says to our people is:—'If the Romany chals would only stick by the Romany chies as the Romany chies sticks by the Romany chals, where 'ud the Gorgios be then? Why, the Romanies would be the strongest people on the arth.' But you see, reia, about this cuss—a cuss has to work itself out, jist for all the world like the bite of a sap."*

Then she continued, with great earnestness, looking across the kindling expanse of hill and valley before us: "You know, the very dead things round us,—these here peaks, an' rocks, an' lakes, an' mountains—ay, an' the woods an' the sun an' the sky above our heads,—cusses us when we do anythink wrong. You may see it by the way they looks at you. Of course I mean when you do anythink wrong accordin' tc us Romanies. I don't mean wrong accordin' to the Gorgios: they're two very different kinds o' wrongs."

"I don't see the difference," said I; "but tell me more about Winifred."

**Sap*, a snake.

"You don't see the difference?" said Sinfi. "Well, then, I do. It's wrong to tell a lie to a Romany, ain't it? But is it wrong to tell a lie to a Gorgio? Not a bit of it. And why? 'Cause most Gorgios is fools and *wants* lies, an' that gives the poor Romanies a chance. But this here cuss is a very bad kind o' cuss. It's a dead man's cuss, and what's wuss, him as is cussed is dead and out of the way, and so it has to be worked out in the blood of his child. But when she's done that, when she's worked it out of her blood, things'll come right agin if the cross is put back agin on your feyther's buzzum."

"When she has done what?" I said.

"Begged her bread in desolate places," said the Gypsy girl, solemnly. "Then if the cross is put back agin on your feyther's buzzum, I believe things'll all come right. It's bad the cusser was your feyther though."

"But why?" I asked.

"There's nobody can't hurt you and them you're fond on as your own breed can. As my poor mammy used to say, 'For good or for ill you must dig deep to bury your daddy.' But you know, brother, the wust o' this job is that it's a trúshul as has been stole."

"A trúshul?"

"What you call a cross. There's nothing in the world so strong for cussin' and blessin' as a trúshul, unless the stars shinin' in the river or the hand in the clouds is as strong. Why, I tell you there's nothin' a trúshul can't do, whether it's curin' a man as is bit by a sap, or wipin' the very rainbow out o' the sky by jist layin' two sticks crossways, or even curin' the cramp in your legs by jist settin' your shoes crossways; there's nothin' for good or bad a trúshul *can't* do if it likes. Hav'n't you never heer'd o' the dukkeripen o' the trúshul shinin' in the sunset sky when the light o' the sinkin' sun shoots up behind a bar o' clouds an' makes a kind o' fiery cross? But to go and steal a trúshul out of a dead man's tomb—why, it's no wonder as the Wynnes is cussed, feyther and child."

I could not have tolerated this prattle about Gypsy superstitions had I not observed that through it all the Gypsy was on the *qui vive,* looking for the traces of her path that Winifred had unconsciously left behind her. Had the Gypsy been following the trail with the silence of an American Indian, she could not have worked more carefully than she

was now working while her tongue went rattling on. I afterwards found this to be a characteristic of her race, as I afterwards found that what is called the long sight of the Gypsies (as displayed in the following of the *patrin**) is not long sight at all, but is the result of a peculiar faculty the Gypsies have of observing more closely than Gorgios do everything that meets their eyes in the woods and on the hills and along the roads. When we reached the spot indicated by the Gypsy as being Winifred's haunt, the ledge where she was in the habit of coming for her imaginary interviews with the "Prince of the Mist," we did not stay there, but for a time still followed the path, which from this point became rougher and rougher, alongside deep precipices and chasms. Every now and then she would stop on a ledge of rock, and, without staying her prattle for a moment, stoop down and examine the earth with eyes that would not have missed the footprint of a rat. When I saw her pause, as she sometimes would in the midst of her scrutiny, to gaze inquiringly down some gulf, which then seemed awful to my inexperienced eyes, but which later on in the day, when I came to see the tremendous chasms of that side of Snowdon, seemed insignificant enough, the circulation of my blood would seem to stop, and then rush again through my body more violently than before. And while the "patrin-chase" went on, and the morning grew brighter and brighter, the Gypsy's lithe, cat-like tread never faltered. The rise and fall of her bosom were as regular and as calm as in the public-house. Such agility and such staying power in a woman astonished me. Finding no trace of Winnie, we returned to the little plateau by Knockers' Llyn.

"This is the place," said the Gypsy; "it used to be called in old times the haunted llyn, because when you sings the Welsh dukkerin' gillie here or plays it on a crwth, the Knockers answers it. I dare say you've heard o' what the Gorgios call the triple echo o' Llyn Ddw'r Arddu. Well, it's somethin' like that, only bein' done by the knockin' sperrits, it's grander and don't come 'cept when they hears the Welsh dukkerin' gillie. Now, you must hide yourself somewheres while I go and touch the crwth in her favourite place. I think she'll come to that. I wish though I hadn't brought ye," she continued, looking at me meditatively; "you're a lit-

*Trail.

tle winded a-ready, and we ain't begun the rough climbin' at all. Up to this 'ere pool Winnie and me and Rhona Boswell used to climb when we was children; it needed longer legs nor ourn to get further up, and you're winded a-ready. If she should come on you suddent, she's liker than not to run for a mile or more up that path where we've just been and then to jump down one of them chasms you've just seed. But if she does pop on ye, don't you try to grab her, whatever you do; leave me alone for that. You ain't got strength enough to grab a hare; you ought to be in bed. Besides, she won't be skeared at me. But," she continued, turning round to look at the vast circuit of peaks stretching away as far as the eye could reach, "we shall have to ketch her to-day somehow. She'll never go back to the cottage where you went and skeared her; and if she don't have a fall, she'll run about these here hills till she drops. We shall have to ketch her to-day somehow. I'm in hopes she'll come to the sound of my crwth, she's so uncommon fond on it; and if she don't come in the flesh, p'rhaps her livin' mullo will come, and that'll show she's alive."

She placed me in a crevice overlooking the small lake, or pool, which on the opposite side was enclosed in a gorge, opening only by a cleft to the east. Then she unburdened herself of a wallet containing the breakfast, saying, "When I come back we'll fall to and breakfiss." She then, as though she were following the trail, made a circuit of the pool and disappeared through the gorge. All around the pool there was a narrow ragged ledge leading to this eastern opening. I stood concealed in my crevice and looked at the peaks, or rather at the vast masses of billowy vapours enveloping them, as they sometimes boiled and sometimes blazed, shaking—when the sun struck one and then another —from brilliant amethyst to vermilion, shot occasionally with purple, or gold, or blue.

A radiance now came pouring through the eastern opening down the gorge or cwm itself, and soon the light vapours floating about the pool were turned to sailing gauzes, all quivering with different dyes, as though a rainbow had become torn from the sky and woven into gossamer hangings and set adrift.

Fatigue was beginning to numb my senses and to conquer my brain. The acuteness of my mental anguish had consumed itself in its own intense fires. The idea of Wini-

fred's danger became more remote. The mist-pageants of the morning seemed somehow to emanate from Winnie.

"No one is worthy to haunt such a scene as this," I murmured, sinking against the rock, "but Winifred—so beautiful of body and pure of soul. Would that I were indeed her 'Prince of the Mist,' and that we could die here together with Sinfi's strains in our ears."

Then I felt coming over me strange influences which afterwards became familiar to me—influences which I can only call the spells of Snowdon. They were far more intense than those strange, sweet, wild, mesmeric throbs which I used to feel in Graylingham Wood, and which my ancestress, Fenella Stanley, seems also to have known, but they were akin to them. Then came the sound of Sinfi's crwth and song, and in the distance repetitions of it, as though the spirits of Snowdon were, in very truth, joining in a chorus.

At once a marvellous change came over me. I seemed to be listening to my ancestress, Fenella Stanley, and not to Sinfi Lovell. I was hearing that strain which in my childhood I had so often tried to imagine, and it was conjuring up the morning sylphs of the mountain air and all the "flower-sprites" and "sunshine elves" of Snowdon.

## V.

I SHOOK off the spell when the music ceased; then I began to wonder why the Gypsy did not return. I was now faint and almost famished for want of food. I opened the Gypsy's wallet. There was the substantial and tempting breakfast she had brought from the cottage cupboard—cold beef and bread, and ale. I spread the breakfast on the ground.

Scarcely had I done so when a figure appeared at the opening of the gorge and caught the ruddy flood of light. It was Winifred, bare-headed. I knew it was she, and I waited in breathless suspense, crouching close up into the crevice, dreading lest she should see me and be frightened away. She stood in the eastern cleft of the gorge against the sun for fully half a minute, looking around as a stag might look that was trying to give the hunters the slip.

"She has seen the Gypsy," I thought, "and been scared by her." Then she came down and glided along the side of the pool. At first she did not see me, though she stood opposite and stopped, while the opalescent vapours from the pool steamed around her, and she shone as through a glittering veil, her eyes flashing like sapphires. The palpitation of my heart choked me; I dared not stir, I dared not speak; the slightest movement or the slightest sound might cause her to start away. There was she whom I had travelled and toiled to find—there was she, so close to me, and yet must I let her pass and perhaps lose her after all—for ever?

Where was the Gypsy girl? I was in an agony of desire to see her or hear her crwth, and yet her approach might frighten Winifred to her destruction.

But Winifred, who had now seen me, did not bound away with that heart-quelling yell of hers which I had dreaded. No, I perceived to my astonishment that the flash of the eyes was not of alarm, but of greeting to me—pleasure at seeing me! She came close to the water, and then I saw a smile on her face through the misty film—a flash of shining teeth.

"May I come?" she said.

"Yes, Winifred," I gasped, scarcely knowing what I said in my surprise and joy.

She came slipping round the pool, and in a few seconds was by my side. Her clothes were saturated with last night's rain, but though she looked very cold, she did not shiver, a proof that she had not lain down on the hills, but had walked about during the whole night. There was no wildness of the maniac stare—there was no idiotic stare. But oh, the witchery of the gaze!

If one could imagine the look on the face of a wanderer from the cloud-palaces of the sylphs, or the gaze in the eyes of a statue newly animated by the passion of the sculptor who had fashioned it, or the smile on the face of a wondering Eve just created upon the earth—any one of these expressions would, perhaps, give the idea of that on Winifred's face as she stood there.

"May I sit down, Prince?" said she.

"Yes, Winnie," I replied; "I've been waiting for you."

"Been waiting for poor Winnie?" she said, her eyes sparkling anew with pleasure; and she sat down close by my side, gazing hungrily at the food—her hands resting on her lap.

I laid my hand upon one of hers; it was so damp and cold that it made me shudder.

"Why, Winifred," I said, "how cold you are!"

"The hills are *so* cold!" said she, "*so* cold when the stars go out, and the red streaks begin to come."

"May I warm your hands in mine, Winnie?" I said, longing to clasp the dear fingers, but trembling lest anything I might say or do should bring about a repetition of last night's catastrophe.

"*Will* you, Prince?" said she. "How very, very kind!" and in a moment the hand was between mine.

Remembering that it was through looking into my eyes that she recognised me in the cottage, I now avoided looking straight into hers. All this time she kept gazing wistfully at the food spread out on the ground.

"Are you hungry, Winifred?" I said.

"Oh yes; *so* hungry!" said she, shaking her head in a sad, meditative way. "Poor Winifred is so hungry and cold and lonely!"

"Will you breakfast with the Prince of the Mist, Winifred?"

"Oh, may I, Prince?" she asked, her face beaming with delight.

"To be sure you may, Winnie. You may always breakfast with the Prince of the Mist if you like.

"Always? Always?" she repeated.

"Yes, Winnie," I said, as I handed her some bread and meat, which she devoured ravenously.

"Yes, dear Winnie," I continued, handing her a foaming horn of Sinfi's ale, to which she did as full justice as she was doing to the bread and meat. "Yes, I want you to breakfast with me and dine with me always."

"Do you mean *live* with you, Prince?" she asked, looking me dreamily in the face—"live with you behind the white mist? Is this our wedding breakfast, Prince?"

"Yes, Winnie."

Then her eyes wandered down over her dress, and she said: "Ah! how strange I did not notice my green fairy kirtle before. And I declare I never felt till this moment the wreath of gold leaves round my forehead. Do they shine much in the sun?"

"They quite dazzle me, Winnie," I said, arching my hand above my eyes, as if to protect them from the glare.

"Do you have a nice fire there when it's very cold?" she said.

"Yes, Winifred," I said.

She then sank into silence, while I kept plying her with food.

After she had appeased her hunger she sat looking into the pool, quite unconscious, apparently, of my presence by her side, and lost in a reverie similar to that which I had seen at the cottage.

The form her dementia had taken was unlike anything that I had ever conceived. Madness seemed too coarse a word to denote so wonderful and fascinating a mental derangement. Mivart's comparison to a musical box recurred to me, and seemed most apt. She was in a waking dream. The peril lay in breaking through that dream and bringing her real life before her. There was a certain cogency of dreamland in all she said and did. And I found that she sank into silent reverie simply because she waited, like a person in sleep, for the current of her thoughts to be directed and dictated by external phenomena. As she sat there gazing in the pool, her hand gradually warming between my two hands, I felt that never when sane, never in her most bewitching moments, had she been so lovable as she was now. This new kind of spell she exercised over me it would be impossible to describe. But it sprang from the expression on her face of that absolute freedom from all self-consciousness which is the great charm in children, combined with the grace and beauty of her own matchless girlhood. A desire to embrace her, to crush her to my breast, seized me like a frenzy.

"Winifred," I said, "you are very cold."

But she was now insensible to sound. I knew from experience now that I must shake her to bring her back to consciousness, for evidently, in her fits of reverie, the sounds falling upon her ear were not conveyed to the brain at all.

I shook her gently, and said, "The Prince of the Mist."

She started back to life. My idea had been a happy one. My words had at once sent her thoughts into the right direction for me.

"Pardon me, Prince," said she, smiling; "I had forgotten that you were here."

"Winifred, I've warmed this hand, now give me the other."

She stretched her other hand across her breast and gave it to me. This brought her entire body close to me, and I said, "Winnie, you are cold all over. Won't you let the Prince of the Mist put his arms round you and warm you?"

"Oh, I should like it so much," she said. "But are you warm, Prince? are you really warm?—your mist is mostly very cold."

"Quite warm, Winifred," I said, as with my heart swelling in my breast, and with eyelids closing over my eyes from very joy, I drew her softly upon my breast once more.

"Yes—yes," I murmured, as the tears gushed from my eyes and dropped upon the soft hair that I was kissing. "If God would but let me have her *thus!* I ask for nothing better than to possess a maniac."

As we sat locked in each other's arms the head of Sinfi appeared round the eastern cliff of the gorge where I had first seen Winifred. The Gypsy had evidently been watching us from there. I perceived that she was signalling to me that I was not to grasp Winifred. Then I saw Sinfi suddenly and excitedly point to the sky over the rock beneath which we sat. I looked up. The upper sky above us was now clear of morning mist, and right over our heads, Winifred's and mine, there hung a little morning cloud like a feather of flickering rosy gold. I looked again towards the corner of jutting rock, but Sinfi's head had disappeared.

"Dear Prince," said Winifred, "how delightfully warm you are! How kind of you! But are not your arms a little too tight, dear Prince? Poor Winnie cannot breathe. And this thump, thump, thump, like a—like a—fire-engine—— *ah!*"

Too late I knew what my folly had done. The turbulent action of my heart had had a sympathetic effect upon hers. It seemed as if her senses, if not her mind, had remembered another occasion, when, as she was lying in my arms, the beating of my heart had disturbed her. In one lightning-flash her real life and all its tragedy broke mercilessly in upon her. The idea of the "Prince of the Mist" fled. She started up and away from me. The awful mimicry of her father's expression spread over her face. With a yell of "Fy Nhad," and then a yell of "Father!" she darted round the pool, and then, bounding up the rugged path like a chamois, disappeared behind a corner of jutting rock.

At the same moment the head of the Gypsy girl reap-

peared round the eastern cleft of the gorge. Sinfi came quickly up to me and whispered, "Don't follow."

"I will," I said.

"No, you won't," said she, seizing my wrist with a grip of iron. "If you do she's done for. Do you know where she is running to? A couple of furlongs up that path there's another that branches off on the right; it ain't more nor a futt-an-a-half wide along a precipuss more than a hundred futt deep. She knows it well. She'll make for that. The cuss is on her wuss nor ever, judgin' from the gurn and the flash of her teeth."

I waited for two or three seconds in the wildest impatience.

"Let's follow her now," I said.

"No, no," she whispered, "not yet, 'less you want to see her tumble down the cliff." After a few minutes Sinfi and I went up the main pathway. Winnie seemed to have slackened her pace when she was out of sight, for we saw her just turning away on the right at the point indicated by Sinfi. "Give her time to get along that path," said she, "and then she'll be all right.

In a state of agonized suspense I stood there waiting. At last I said:

"I must go after her. We shall lose her—I know we shall lose her."

Sinfi demurred a moment, then acceded to my wish, and we went up the main pathway and peered round the corner of the jutting rock where Winifred had last been visible. There, along a ragged shelf bordering a yawning chasm—a shelf that seemed to me scarce wide enough for a human foot —Winifred was running and balancing herself as surely as a bird over the abyss.

"Mind she doesn't turn round sharp and see you," said the Gypsy. "If she does she'll lose her head and over she'll fall!"

I crouched and gazed at Winifred as she glided along towards a vast mountain of vapour that was rolling over the chasm close to her. She stood and looked into the floating mass for a moment, and then passed into it and was lost from view.

## VI.

"*Now* I can follow her," said Sinfi; "but you mustn't try to come along here. Wait till I come back. I suppose you've given her all the breakfiss. Give me a drop of brandy out o' your flask."

I gave her some brandy and took a long draught of the burning liquor myself, for I was fainting.

"I shall go with you," I said.

"Dordi," said the Gypsy, "how quickly you'd be a-layin' at the bottom there!" and she pointed down into the gulf at our feet.

"I shall go with you," I said.

"No, you won't," said the Gypsy doggedly; "'cause *I* sha'n't go. I shall git round and meet her. I know where we shall strike across her slot. She'll be makin' for Llanberis."

"I let her escape," I moaned. "I had her in my arms once; but you signalled to me not to grip her."

"If you had ha' grabbed her," said the Gypsy, "she'd ha' pulled you along like a feather—she's so mad-strong. You go back to the llyn."

The Gypsy girl passed along the shelf and was soon lost in the veil of vapour.

I returned to the llyn and threw myself down upon the ground, for my legs sank under me, but the dizziness of fatigue softened the effect of my distress. The rocks and peaks were swinging round my head. Soon I found the Gypsy bending over me.

"I can't find her," said she. "We had best make haste and strike across her path as she makes for Llanberis. I have a notion as she's sure to do that."

As fast as we could scramble along those rugged tracks we made our way to the point where the Gypsy expected that Winifred would pass. We remained for hours, beating about in all directions in search of her,—Sinfi every now and then touching her crwth with the bow,—but without any result.

"It's my belief she's gone straight down to Llanberis," said Sinfi; "and we'd best lose no time, but go there too."

We went right to the top of the mountain and rested for

a little time on y Wyddfa, Sinfi taking some bread and cheese and ale in the cabin there. Then we descended the other side. I had not sense then to notice the sunset-glories, the peaks of mountains melting into a sky of rose and light-green, over which a phalanx of fiery clouds was filing; and yet I see it all now as I write, and I hear what I did not seem to hear then, the musical chant of a Welsh guide ahead of us, who was conducting a party of happy tourists to Llanberis.

When we reached the village, we spent hours in making searches and inquiries, but could find no trace of her. Oh, the appalling thought of Winifred wandering about all night famishing on the hills! I went to the inn which Sinfi pointed out to me, while she went in quest of some Gypsy friends, who, she said, were stopping in the neighbourhood. She promised to come to me early in the morning, in order that we might renew our search at break of day.

When I turned into bed after supper I said to myself: "There will be no sleep for me this night." But I was mistaken. So great was my fatigue that sleep came upon me with a strength that was sudden and irresistible; when the servant came to call me at sunrise, I felt as though I had just gone to bed. It was, no doubt, this sound sleep, and entire respite from the tension of mind I had undergone, which saved me from another serious illness.

I found the Gypsy already waiting for me below, preparing for the labours before her by making a hearty meal on salt beef and ale.

"Reia," said she, pointing to the beef with her knife, "we sha'n't get bite nor sup, 'cept what we carry, either inside or out, for twelve hours,—perhaps not for twenty-four. Before I give up this slot there ain't a path, nor a hill, nor a rock, nor a valley, nor a precipuss as won't feel my fut. Come! set to."

I took the Gypsy's advice, made as hearty a breakfast as I could, and we left Llanberis in the light of morning. It was not till we had reached and passed a place called Gwastadnant Gate that the path along which we went became really wild and difficult. The Gypsy seemed to know every inch of the country.

We reached a beautiful lake, where Sinfi stopped, and I began to question her as to what was to be our route.

"Winnie know'd," said she, "some Welsh folk as fish in

this 'ere lake. She might ha' called 'em to mind, poor thing, and come off here. I'm a-goin' to ask about her."

Sinfi's inquiries here—her inquiries everywhere that day—ended in nothing but blank and cruel disappointment.

Remembering that Winifred's very earliest childhood was passed near Carnarvon, I proposed to the Gypsy that we should go thither at once.

After sleeping again at Llanberis, we went to Carnarvon, but soon returned to the other side of Snowdon, for at Carnarvon we could find no trace of her.

"Oh, Sinfi," I said, as we stood watching the peculiar bright yellow trout in Lake Ogwen, "she is starving—starving on the hills—while millions of people are eating, gorging, wasting food. I shall go mad!"

Sinfi looked at me mournfully and said:

"It's a bad job, reia, but if poor Winnie Wynne's a-starvin' it ain't the fault o' them as happens to ha' got the full belly. There ain't a Romany in Wales, nor there ain't a Gorgio nuther, as wouldn't give Winnie a crust, if wonst we could find her."

"To think of this great, rich world," I exclaimed (to myself, not to the Gypsy), "choke-full of harvest, bursting with grain, while famishing on the hills for a mouthful is she—the one!"

"Reia," said Sinfi, with much solemnity, "the world's full o' vittles; what's wanted is jist a hand as can put the vittles and the mouths where they ought to be—cluss togither. That's what the hungry Romany says when he snares a hare or a rabbit."

We walked on. After a while Sinfi said: "A Romany knows more o' these here kinds o' things, reia, than a Gorgio does. It's my belief as Winnie Wynne ain't a-starvin' on the hills; she ain't *got* to starve; she's on'y got to beg her bread. She'll have to do that, of course; but beggin' ain't so bad as starvin', after all! There's some as begs for the love on it. Videy does."

I knew by this time that it was useless to battle against Sinfi's conviction that the curse would have to be literally fulfilled, so I kept silence. While she was speaking I was suddenly struck by a thought that ought to have come before.

"Sinfi," I said, "didn't you know an English lady named Dalrymple, who lodged with Mrs. Davies for some years?"

"Yis," said Sinfi, "and I did think o' her. She went to live at Carnarvon. But supposin' that Winnie had gone to the English lady—supposin' that she know'd where to find her—the lady 'ud never ha' let her go away, she was so fond on her. It was Miss Dalrymple as sp'ilt Winnie, a-givin' her lady-notions."

However, I determined to see Miss Dalrymple, and started alone for Carnarvon at once. By making inquiries at the Carnarvon post office I found Miss Dalrymple, a pale-faced, careworn lady of extraordinary culture, who evinced the greatest affection for Winifred. She had seen nothing of her, and was much distressed at the fragments of Winifred's story which I thought it well to give her. When she bade me good-bye, she said: "I know something of your family. I know your mother and aunt. The sweet girl you are seeking is in my judgment one of the most gifted young women living. Her education, as you may be aware, she owes mainly to me. But she took to every kind of intellectual pursuit by instinct. Reared in a poor Welsh cottage as she was, there is, I believe, almost no place in society that she is not fitted to fill."

On leaving Carnarvon I returned to Sinfi Lovell.

But why should I weary the reader by a detailed acount of my wanderings and searchings, with my strange guide that day, and the next, and the next? Why should I burthen him with the mental agonies I suffered as Sinfi and I, during the following days, explored the country for miles and miles—right away beyond the Cross Foxes, as far as Dolgelley and the region of Cader Idris? At last, one evening, when I and Rhona Boswell and some of her family were walking down Snowdon towards Llanberis, Sinfi announced her conviction that Winifred was no longer in the Snowdon region at all, perhaps not even in Wales at all.

"You mean, I suppose, that she is dead," I said.

"Dead?" said Sinfi, the mysterious sibylline look returning immediately to her face that had just seemed so frank and simple. "She ain't got to *die*; she's only got to beg. But I shall ha' to leave you now. I can't do you no more good. And besides, my daddy's goin' into the Eastern Counties with the Welsh ponies, and so is Jasper Bozzell and Rhona. Videy and me are goin' too, in course."

With deep regret and dismay I felt that I must part from her. How well I remember that evening! I feel as now I

write the delicious summer breeze of Snowdon blowing on my forehead. The sky, which for some time had been growing very rich, grew at every moment rarer in colour, and glassed itself in the tarns which shone with an enjoyment of the beauty like the magic mirrors of Snowdonian spirits. The loveliness indeed was so bewitching that one or two of the Gypsies—a race who are, as I had already noticed, among the few uncultivated people that show a susceptibility to the beauties of nature—gave a long sigh of pleasure, and lingered at the llyn of the triple echo, to see how the soft iridescent opal brightened and shifted into sapphire and orange, and then into green and gold. As a small requital of her valuable services I offered her what money I had about me, and promised to send as much more as she might require as soon as I reached the hotel at Dolgelley, where at the moment my portmanteau was lying in the landlord's charge.

"*Me* take money for tryin' to find my sister, Winnie Wynne?" said Sinfi, in astonishment more than in anger. "Seein' reia, as I'd jist sell everythink I've got to find her, I should like to know how many gold balansers [sovereigns] 'ud pay me. No, reia, Winnie Wynne ain't in Wales at all, else I'd never give up this patrin-chase. So fare ye well;" and she held out her hand, which I grasped, reluctant to let it go.

"Fare ye well, reia," she repeated, as she walked swiftly away; "I wonder whether we shall ever meet agin."

"Indeed, I hope so," I said.

Her sister Videy, who with Rhona Boswell was walking near us, was present at the parting—a bright-eyed, dark-skinned little girl, a head shorter than Sinfi. I saw Videy's eyes glisten greedily at sight of the gold, and, after we had parted, I was not at all surprised, though I knew her father, Panuel Lovell, a frequenter of Raxton fairs, to be a man of means, when she came back and said, with a coquettish smile:

"Give the bright balansers to Lady Sinfi's poor sister, my rei; give the balansers to the poor Gypsy, my rei."

Rhona, however, instead of joining Videy in the prayer for backsheesh, ran down the path in the footsteps of Sinfi.

What money I had about me I was carrying loose in my waistcoat pocket, and I pulled it out, gold and silver together. I picked out the sovereigns (five) and gave them to

her, retaining half-a-sovereign and the silver for my use before returning to the hotel at Dolgelley. Videy took the sovereigns and then pointed, with a dazzling smile, to the half-sovereign, saying, "Give Lady Sinfi's poor sister the posh balanser [half-sovereign], my rei."

I gave her the half-sovereign, when she immediately pointed to a half-crown in my hand, and said: "Give the poor Gypsy the posh-courna, my rei."

So grateful was I to the very name of Lovell, that I was hesitating whether to do this, when I was suddenly aware of the presence of Sinfi, who had returned with Rhona. In a moment Videy's wrist was in a grip I had become familiar with, and the money fell to the ground. Sinfi pointed to the money and said some words in Romany. Videy stooped and picked the coins up in evident alarm. Sinfi then said some more words in Romany, whereupon Videy held out the money to me. I felt it best to receive it, though Sinfi never once looked at me; and I could not tell what expression her own honest face wore, whether of deadly anger or mortal shame. The two sisters walked off in silence together, while Rhona set up a kind of war-dance behind them, and the three went down the path.

In a few minutes Sinfi again returned and, pointing in great excitement to the sunset sky, cried: "Look, look! The Dukkeripen of the trúshul."* And, indeed, the sunset was now making a spectacle such as might have aroused a spasm of admiration in the most prosaic breast. As I looked at it and then turned to look at Sinfi's noble features, illumined and spiritualized by a light that seemed more than earthly, a new feeling came upon me as though y Wyddfa and the clouds were joining in a prophecy of hope.

## VII.

After losing Sinfi I hired some men to assist me in my search. Day after day did we continue the quest; but no trace of Winifred could be found. The universal opinion was that she had taken sudden alarm at something, lost her foothold and fallen down a precipice, as so many unfortunate tourists had done in North Wales.

*Cross.

One day I and one of my men met, on a spur of the Glyder, the tourist of the flint implements with whom I had conversed at Bettws y Coed. He was alone, geologising or else searching for flint implements on the hills. Evidently my haggard appearance startled him. But when he learnt what was my trouble he became deeply interested. He told me that the day after our meeting at the "Royal Oak," Bettws y Coed, he had met a wild-looking girl as he was using his geologist's hammer on the mountains. She was bare-headed, and had taken fright at him, and had run madly in the direction of the most dangerous chasm on the range; he had pursued her, hoping to save her from destruction, but lost sight of her close to the chasm's brink. The expression on his face told me what his thoughts were as to her fate. He accompanied me to the chasm. It was indeed a dreadful place. We got to the bottom by a winding path, and searched till dusk among the rocks and torrents, finding nothing. But I felt that in wild and ragged pits like those, covered here and there with rough and shaggy brushwood, and full of wild cascades and deep pools, a body might well be concealed till doomsday.

My kind-hearted companion accompanied me for some miles, and did his best to dispel my gloom by his lively and intelligent talk. We parted at Pen y Gwryd. I never saw him again. I never knew his name. Should these lines ever come beneath his eyes he will know that though the great ocean of human life rolls between his life-vessel and mine, I have not forgotten how and where once we touched.

But how could I rest? Though Hope herself was laughing my hopes to scorn, how could I rest? How could I cease to search?

Bitter as it was to wander about the hills teasing my soul by delusions which other people must fain smile at, it would have been more bitter still to accept for certainty the intolerable truth that Winifred had died famished, or that her beloved body was a mangled corpse at the bottom of a cliff. If the reader does not understand this, it is because he finds it impossible to understand a sorrow like mine. I refused to return to Raxton, and took Mrs. Davies's cottage, which was unoccupied, and lived there throughout the autumn. Every day, wet or dry, I used to sally out on the Snowdonian range, just as though she had been lost but yesterday, making inquiries, bribing the good-natured Welsh

people (who needed no bribing) to aid me in a search which to them must have seemed monomaniacal.

The peasants and farmers all knew me. "Sut mae dy galon?" (How is thy heart?) they would say in the beautiful Welsh phrase as I met them. "How is thy heart, indeed!" I would sigh as I went on my way.

Before I went to Wales in search of Winifred I had never set foot in the Principality. Before I left it there was scarcely a Welshman who knew more familiarly than I every mile of the Snowdonian country. Never a trace of Winifred could I find.

At the end of the autumn I left the cottage and removed to Pen y gwryd, as a comparatively easy point from which I could reach the mountain tarn where I had breakfasted with Winifred on that morning. Afterwards I took up my abode at a fishing inn, and here I stayed the winter through —scarcely hoping to find her now, yet chained to Snowdon. After my labours during the day, scrambling among slippery boulders and rugged rocks, crossing swollen torrent-beds, amid rain and ice and snow and mist such as frightened away the Welsh themselves—after thus wandering, because I could not leave the region, it was a comfort to me to turn into the low, black-beamed room of the fishing-inn, with drying hams, flitches of bacon, and fishing-rods for decorations, and hear the simple-hearted Cymric folk talking, sometimes in Welsh, sometimes in English, but always with that kindness and that courtesy which go to make the poetry of Welsh common life.

Meantime, I had, as I need scarcely say, spared neither trouble nor expense in advertising for information about Winifred in the Welsh and the West of England newspapers. I offered rewards for her discovery, and the result was merely that I was pestered by letters from people (some of them tourists of education) suggesting traces and clues of so wild, and often of so fantastic a kind, that I arrived at the conviction that of all man's faculties his imagination is the most lawless, and at the same time the most powerful. It was perfectly inconceivable to me that the writers of some of these letters were not themselves demented, so wild or so fanciful were the clues they suggested. Yet, when I came to meet them and talk with them (as I sometimes did), I found these correspondents to be of the ordinary prosaic British type. All my efforts were to no purpose.

Among my longer journeys from the fishing-inn, the most frequent were those to Hollywell, near Flint, to the Well of St. Winifred—the reader need not be told why. He will recollect how little Winnie, while plying me with strawberries, had sagely recommended the holy water of this famous well as a "cure for crutches." She had actually brought me some of it in a lemonade bottle when she returned to Raxton after her first absence, and had insisted on rubbing my ankle with it. She had, as I afterwards learnt from her father, importuned and at last induced her aunt (evidently a good-natured and worthy soul) to take her to visit a relative in Holywell, a journey of many miles, for the purpose of bringing home with her a bottle of the holy water. Whenever any ascent of the gangways had proved to be more successful than usual, Winifred had attributed the good luck to the virtues contained in her lemonade bottle. Ah! superstition seemed pretty enough then.

At first in the forlorn hope that memory might have attracted her thither, and afterwards because there was a fascination for me in the well on account of its association with her, my pilgrimages to Holywell were as frequent as those of any of the afflicted devotees of the olden time, whose crutches left behind testified to the genuineness of the Saint's pretensions. Into that well Winifred's innocent young eyes had gazed—gazed in the full belief that the holy water would cure me—gazed in the full belief that the crimson stains made by the *byssus* on the stones were stains left by her martyr-namesake's blood. Where had she stood when she came and looked into the well and the rivulet? On what exact spot had rested her feet—those little rosy feet that on the sea-sands used to flash through the receding foam as she chased the ebbing billows to amuse me, while I sat between my crutches in the cove looking on? It was, I found, possible to gaze in that water till it seemed alive with her—seemed to hold the reflection of the little face which years ago peered anxiously into it for the behoof of the crippled child-lover pining for her at Raxton, and unable to "get up or down the gangways without her."

Holywell grew to have a fascination for me, and in the following spring I left the fishing-inn beneath Snowdon, and took rooms in this interesting old town.

## VIII.

One day, near the rivulet that runs from St. Winifred's Well, I suddenly encountered Sinfi Lovell.

"Sinfi," I said, "she's dead, she's surely dead."

"I tell ye, brother, she ain't got to die!" said Sinfi, as she came and stood beside me. "Winnie Wynne's on'y got to beg her bread. She's alive."

"Where is she?" I cried. "Oh, Sinfi, I shall go mad!"

"There you're too fast for me, brother," said she, "when you ask me *where* she is; but she's alive, and I ain't come quite emp'y-handed of news about her, brother."

"Oh, tell me!" said I.

"Well," said Sinfi, "I've just met one of our people, Euri Lovell, as says that, the very mornin' after we seed her on the hills, he met her close to Carnarvon at break of day."

"Then she *did* go to Carnarvon," I said. "What a distance for those dear feet!"

"Euri knowed her by sight," said Sinfi, "but didn't know about her bein' under the cuss, so he jist let her pass, sayin' to hisself, 'She looks jist like a crazy wench this mornin', does Winnie Wynne.' Euri was a-goin' through Carnarvon to Bangor, on to Conway and Chester, and never heerd a word about her bein' lost till he got back, six weeks ago."

"I must go to Carnarvon at once," said I.

"No use, brother," said Sinfi. "If *I* han't pretty well worked Carnarvon, it's a pity. I've been there the last three weeks on the patrin-chase, and not a patrin could I find. It's my belief as she never went into Carnarvon town at all, but turned off and went into Llanbeblig churchyard."

"Why do you think so, Sinfi?"

"'Cause her aunt, bein' a Carnarvon woman, was buried among her own kin in Llanbeblig churchyard. Leastwise, you won't find a ghose of a trace on her at Carnarvon, and it'll be a long kind of a wild-goose chase from here; but if you *will* go, go you must."

She could not dissuade me from starting for Carnarvon at once; and, as I would go, she seemed to take it as a matter of course that she must accompany me. Our journey was partly by coach and partly afoot.

My first impulse on nearing Carnarvon was to go—I could not have said why—to Llanbeblig churchyard.

Among the group of graves of the Davieses we easily found that of Winifred's aunt, beneath a newly-planted arbutus tree. After looking at the modest mound for some time, and wondering where Winifred had stood when the coffin was lowered—as I had wondered where she had stood at St. Winifred's Well—I roamed about the churchyard with Sinfi in silence for a time.

At last she said: "I mind comin' here wonst with Winnie, and I mind her sayin': 'There's no place I should so much like to be buried in as in Llanbeblig churchyard. The graves of them as die unmarried *do* look so beautiful.'"

"How did she know the graves of those who die unmarried?"

Sinfi looked over the churchyard and waved her hand.

"Wherever you see them beautiful primroses, and them shinin' snowdrops, and them sweet-smellin' vi'lets, that's allus the grave of a child or else of a young Gorgie as died a maid; and wherever you see them laurel trees, and box trees, and 'butus trees, that's the grave of a pusson as ain't nuther child nor maid, an' the Welsh folk think nobody else on'y child'n an' maids ain't quite good enough to be turned into the blessed flowers o' spring."

"Next to the sea," I said, "she loved the flowers of spring."

"And *I* should like to be buried here too, brother," said Sinfi, as we left the churchyard.

"But a fine strong girl like you, Sinfi, is not very likely to die unmarried while there are Romany bachelors about."

"There ain't a-many Romany chals," she said, "as du'st marry Sinfi Lovell, even supposin' as Sinfi Lovell 'ud marry *them*, an' a Gorgio she'll never marry—an' never can marry. And to lay here aneath the flowers o' spring, wi' the Welsh sun a-shinin' on 'em as it's a-shinin' now, *that* must be a sweet kind o' bed, brother, and for anythink as I knows on, a Romany chi 'ud make as sweet a bed of vi'lets as the beautifullest Gorgie-wench as wur ever bred in Carnarvon, an' as shinin' a bunch o' snowdrops as ever the Welsh spring knows how to grow."

At any other time this extraordinary girl's talk would have interested me greatly; *now*, nothing had any interest for me that did not bear directly upon the fate of Winifred.

Little dreaming how this quiet churchyard had lately been one of the battle grounds of that all-conquering power (Destiny, or Circumstance?) which had governed Winnie's life and mine, I went with Sinfi into Carnarvon, and made inquiry everywhere, but without the slightest result. This occupied several days, during which time Sinfi stayed with some acquaintances encamped near Carnarvon, while I lodged at a little hotel.

"You don't ask me how you happened to meet me at Holywell, brother," said she to me, as we stood looking across the water at Carnarvon Castle, over whose mighty battlements the moon was fighting with an army of black, angry clouds, which a wild wind was leading furiously against her—"you don't ask me how you happened to meet me at Holywell, nor how long I've been back agin in dear old Wales, nor what I've been a-doin' on since we parted; but that's nuther here nor there. I'll tell you what I think about Winnie an' the chances o' findin' her, brother, and that'll intrust you more."

"What is it, Sinfi?" I cried, waking up from the reminiscences, bitter and sweet, the bright moon had conjured up in my mind.

"Well, brother, Winnie, you see, was very fond o' me."

"She was, and good reason for being fond of you she had."

"Well, brother, bein' very fond o' me, *that* made her very fond o' *all* Romanies; and though she took agin me at fust, arter the cuss, as she took agin you because we was her closest friends (that's what Mr. Blyth said, you know, they allus do), she wouldn't take agin Romanies in general. No, she'd take *to* Romanies in general, and she'd go hangin' about the different camps, and she'd soon be snapped up, being so comely, and they'd make a lot o' money out on her jist havin' her with 'em for the 'dukkerin'."

"I don't understand you," I said.

"Well, you know," said Sinfi, "anybody as is under the cuss is half with the sperrits and half with us, and so can tell the *real* 'dukkerin'.' Only it's bad for a Romany to have another Romany in the 'place' as is under the cuss; but it don't matter a bit about having a Gorgio among your breed as is under a cuss; for Gorgio cuss can't never touch Romany."

"Then you feel quite sure she's not dead, Sinfi?"

"She's jist as live as you an' me somewheres, brother.

There's two things as keeps *her* alive: there's the cuss, as says she's got to beg her bread, and there's the dukkeripen o' the Golden Hand on Snowdon, as says she's got to marry you."

"But, Sinfi, I mean that, apart from all this superstition of yours, you have reason to think she's alive? and you think she's with the Romanies?"

"I know she's alive, and I think she's with the Romanies. She *must* be, brother, with the Shaws, or the Lees, or the Stanleys, or the Bozzells, or some on 'em."

"Then," said I, "I'll turn Gypsy; I'll be the second Aylwin to own allegiance to the blood of Fenella Stanley. I'll scour Great Britain till I find her."

"You can jine *us* if you like, brother. We're goin' all through the West of England with the gries. You're fond o' fishin' and shootin', brother, an' though you're a Gorgio, you can't help bein' a Gorgio, and you ain't a mumply 'un, as I've said to Jim Burton many's the time; and if you can't give the left-hand body-blow like me, there ain't a-many Gorgios nor yit a-many Romanies as knows better nor you what their fistes wur made for, an' altogether, brother, Beng te tassa mandi if I shouldn't be right-on proud to see ye jine our breed. There's a coachmaker down in Chester, and he's got for sale the beautifullest livin'-waggin in all England. It's shiny orange-yellow with red window-blinds, and if there's a colour in any rainbow as *can't* be seed in the panels o' the front door, it's a kind o' rainbow I ain't never seed nowheres. He made it for Jericho Bozzell, the rich Griengro as so often stays at Raxton and at Gypsy Dell; but Rhona Bozzell hates a waggin and allus will sleep in a tent. They do say as the Prince o' Wales wants to buy that livin'-waggin, only he can't spare the balansers just now—his family bein' so big an' times bein' so bad. How much money ha' you got? Can you stan' a hundud an' fifty gold balansers for the waggin besides the fixins?"

"Sinfi," I said, "I'm prepared to spend more than that in seeking Winnie."

"Dordi, brother, you must be as rich as my dad, an' he's the richest Griengro arter Jericho Bozzell. You an' me'll jist go down to Chester," she continued, her eyes sparkling with delight at the prospect of bargaining for the waggon, "an' we'll fix up sich a livin'-waggin as no Romany rei never had afore."

"Agreed!" I said, wringing her hand.

"An' now you an' me's right pals," said Sinfi.

We went to Chester, and I became owner of the famous "livin'-waggin" coveted (according to Sinfi) by the great personage whom, on account of his name, she always spoke of as a rich, powerful, but mysterious and invisible Welshman. One of the monthly cheese-fairs was going on in the Linen Hall. Among the rows of Welsh carts standing in front of the "Old Yacht Inn," Sinfi introduced me to a "Griengro" (one of the Gypsy Locks of Gloucestershire) of whom I bought a bay mare of extraordinary strength and endurance.

## IX.

It was, then, to find Winifred that I joined the Gypsies. And yet I will not deny that affinity with the kinsfolk of my ancestress Fenella Stanley must have had something to do with this passage in my eccentric life. That strain of Romany blood which, according to my mother's theory, had much to do with drawing Percy Aylwin and Rhona Boswell together, was alive and potent in my own veins.

But I must pause here to say a few words about Sinfi Lovell. Some of my readers must have already recognised her as a famous character in bohemian circles. Sinfi's father was a "Griengro," that is to say, a horse-dealer. She was, indeed, none other than that "Fiddling Sinfi" who became famous in many parts of England and Wales as a violinist, and also as the only performer on the old Welsh stringed instrument called the "crwth," or cruth. Most Gypsies are musical, but Sinfi was a genuine musical genius. Having become, through the good nature of Winifred's aunt Mrs. Davies, the possessor of a crwth, and having been taught by her the unique capabilities of that rarely seen instrument, she soon learnt the art of fascinating her Welsh patrons by the strange, wild strains she could draw from it. This obsolete six-stringed instrument (with two of the strings reaching beyond the key-board, used as drones and struck by the thumb, the bow only being used on the other four, and a bridge placed, not at right angles to the sides of the instrument, but in an oblique direction), though in

some important respects inferior to the violin, is in other respects superior to it. Heard among the peaks of Snowdon, as I heard them during our search for Winifred, the notes of the crwth have a wonderful wildness and pathos. It is supposed to have the power of drawing the spirits when a maiden sings to its accompaniment a mysterious old Cymric song or incantation.

Among her own people it was as a seeress, as an adept in the real dukkering—the dukkering for the Romanies, as distinguished from the false dukkering, the dukkering for the Gorgios—that Sinfi's fame was great. She had travelled over nearly all England—wherever, in short, there were horse-fairs—and was familiar with London, where in the studios of artists she was in request as a face model of extraordinary value. Nor were these all the characteristics that distinguished her from the common herd of Romany chies: she was one of the few Gypsies of either sex who could speak with equal fluency both the English and Welsh Romanes, and she was in the habit sometimes of mixing the two dialects in a most singular way. Though she had lived much in Wales, and had a passionate love of Snowdon, she belonged to a famous branch of the Lovells whose haunt had for ages been in Wales and also the East Midlands, and she had caught entirely the accent of that district.

Among artists in London, as I afterwards learnt, she often went by the playful name of "Lady Sinfi Lovell," for the following reason:

She was extremely proud, and believed the "Kaulo Camloes" to represent the aristocracy not only of the Gypsies, but of the world. Moreover, she had of late been brought into close contact with a certain travelling band of Hungarian Gypsy-musicians, who visited England some time ago. Intercourse with these had fostered her pride in a curious manner. The musicians are the most intelligent and most widely-travelled not only of the Hungarian Gypsies, but of all the Romany race. They are darker than the sátoros czijányok, or tented Gypsies. The Lovells being the darkest of all the Gypsies of Great Britain (and the most handsome, hence called Kaulo Camloes), it was easy to make out an affinity closer than common between the Lovells and the Hungarian musicians. Sinfi heard much talk among the Hungarians of the splendours of the early leaders of the continental Romanies. She was told of Romany

kings, dukes and counts. She accepted, with that entire faith which characterised her, the stories of the exploits of Duke Michael, Duke Andreas, Duke Panuel, and the rest. It only needed a hint from one of her continental friends, that her father, Panuel Lovell, was probably a descendant of Duke Panuel, for Sinfi to consider him a duke. From that moment she felt as strongly as any Gorgie ever felt the fine sentiment expressed in the phrase, *noblesse oblige;* and to hear her say, "I'm a duke's chavi [daughter], and mustn't do so and so," was a delightful and refreshing experience to me. Poor Panuel groaned under these honours, for Sinfi insisted now on his dressing in a brown velveteen coat, scarlet waistcoat with gold coins for buttons, and the high-crowned ribbon-bedizened hat which prosperous Gypsies once used to wear. She seemed to consider that her sister Videy (whose tastes were low for a Welsh Gypsy) did not belong to the high aristocracy, though born of the same father and mother. Moreover, "dook" in Romanes means spirit, ghost, and very likely Sinfi found some power of association in this fact; for Videy was a born sceptic.

One of the special charms of Gypsy life is that a man fully admitted into the Romany brotherhood can be on terms of close intimacy with a Gypsy girl without awaking the smallest suspicion of love-making or flirtation; at least it was so in my time.

Under my father's will, a considerable legacy had come to me, and, after going to London to receive this, I made the circuit of the West of England with Sinfi's people. No sign whatever of Winifred did I find in any of the camps. I was for returning to Wales, where my thoughts always were; but I could not expect Sinfi to leave her family, so I started thither alone, leaving my waggon in their charge. Before I reached Wales, however, I met in the eastern part of Cheshire, not far from Moreton Hall, some English Lees, with whom I got into talk about the Hungarian musicians, who were here then on another flying visit to England. Something that dropped from one of the Lees as to the traditions and superstitions of the Hungarian Gypsies with regard to people suffering from dementia set me to thinking; and at last I came to the conclusion that if I really believed Winifred to have taken shelter among the Romanies, it would be absurd not to follow up a band like these Hungarians. Accordingly I changed my course, and followed

them up; but again without finding the slightest clue. Eventually I returned to Wales, partly because that seemed to be even yet the most likely region to afford some trace, partly because I should there again see Sinfi Lovell on her return from England.

My health was now much impaired by sleeplessness (the inevitable result of my anxiety), and by a narcotic, which from the commencement of my troubles I had been in the habit of taking in ever-increasing doses—a terrible narcotic, one of whose multitudinous effects is that of sending all the patient's thoughts circling around one central idea like planets round the sun. Painful and agonizing as had been my suspense,—my oscillation between hope and dread,—during my wanderings with the Lovells, these wanderings had not been without their moments of comfort, for all of which I had been indebted to Sinfi. She would sit with me in an English lane, under a hedge or tree, on a balmy summer evening, or among the primroses, wild hyacinths, buttercups and daisies of the sweet meadows, chattering her reminiscences of Winifred. She would mostly end by saying: "Winnie was very fond on ye, brother, and we shall find her yit. The Golden Hand on Snowdon wasn't sent there for nothink. The dukkeripen says you'll marry her yit; a love like yourn can follow the tryenest patrin as ever wur laid." Then she would play on her crwth and say, "Ah, brother, I shall be able to make this crwth bring ye a sight o' Winnie's livin' mullo if she's alive, and there ain't a sperrit of the hills as wouldn't answer to it."

Of Gorgios generally, however, Sinfi had at heart a feeling somewhat akin to dread. I could not understand it.

"Why do you dislike the Gorgios, Sinfi?" I said to her one day on Lake Ogwen, after the return of the Lovells to Wales. We were trout-fishing from a boat anchored to a heavy block of granite which she had fastened to a rope and heaved overboard with a strength that would have surpassed that of most Englishwomen.

"That's nuther here nor there, brother," she replied, mysteriously. So months and months dragged by, and brought no trace of Winifred.

# IV.

# The Leader of the Aylwinians

# IV.—THE LEADER OF THE AYLWINIANS

## I.

One day as Sinfi and I were strolling through the lovely glades between Capel Curig and Bettws y Coed, on our way to a fishing-place, we sat down by a stream to eat some bread and cheese we had brought with us.

The sunlight, as it broke here and there between the thick foliage, was playing upon the little cascades in such magical fashion—turning the water into a torrent that seemed as though molten rubies and sapphires and opals were ablaze in one dancing faery stream—that even the dark tragedy of human life seemed enveloped for a moment in an atmosphere of poetry and beauty. Sinfi gazed at it silently, then she said:

"This is the very place where Winnie wonst tried to save a hernshaw as wur wounded. She wur tryin' to ketch hold on it, as the water wur carryin' it along, and he pretty nigh beat her to death wi' his wings for her pains. It wur then as she come an' stayed along o' us for a bit, an' she got to be as fond o' my crwth as you be's, an' she used to say that if there wur any music as 'ud draw her sperrit back to the airth arter she wur dead it 'ud be the sound o' my crwth; but there she wur wrong as wrong could be: Romany music could never touch Gorgio sperrit; 'tain't a bit likely. But it can draw her livin' mullo [wraith]." And as she spoke she began to play her crwth *pizzicato* and to sing the opening bars of the old Welsh incantation which I had heard on Snowdon on that never-to-be forgotten morning.

This, as usual, sent my mind at once back to the picture of Fenella Stanley calling round her by the aid of her music the spirits of Snowdon. And then a strange hallucination

came upon me, that made me clutch at Sinfi's arm. Close by her, reflected in a little glassy pool divided off from the current by a ring of stones, two blue eyes seemed gazing. Then the face and the entire figure of Winifred appeared, but Winifred dressed as a beggar girl in rags, Winifred standing at a street corner holding out matches for sale.

"Winifred!" I exclaimed; and then the hallucination passed, and Sinfi's features were reflected in the water. My exclamation had the strangest effect upon Sinfi. Her lips, which usually wore a peculiarly proud and fearless curve, quivered, and were losing the brilliant rosebud redness which mostly characterised them. The little blue tattoo rosettes at the corners of her mouth seemed to be growing more distinct as she gazed in the water through eyes dark and mysterious as Night's, but, like Night's own eyes, ready, I thought, to call up the throbbing fires of a million stars.

"What made you cry out 'Winifred'?" she said, as the music ceased.

"What you told me about the spirits following the crwth was causing the strangest dream," I answered. "I thought I saw Winnie's face reflected in the water, and I thought she was in awful distress. And all the time it was your face."

"That wur her livin' mullo," said Sinfi, solemnly.

Convinced though I was that the hallucination was the natural result of Sinfi's harping upon the literal fulfilment of the curse, it depressed me greatly.

Close to this beautiful spot we came suddenly upon two tourists sketching. And now occurred one of those surprises of which I have found that real life is far more full than any fiction dares to be. As we passed the artists I heard one call out to the other, with a "burr" which I will not attempt to render, having never lived in the "Black Country":

"You have a true eye for composition; what do you think of this tree?"

The speaker's remarkable appearance attracted my attention.

"Well," said I to Sinfi, "that's the first time I ever saw a painter shaven and dressed in a coat like a Quaker's."

Sinfi looked across at the speaker through the curling smoke from my pipe, gave a start of surprise, and then said: "So you've never seed *him?* That's because you're a coun-

try Johnny, brother, and don't know nothink about Londra life. That's a friend o' mine from Londra as has painted me many's the time."

"Painted you?" I said; "the man in black, with the goggle eyes, squatting there under the white umbrella? What's his name?"

"That's the cel'erated Mr. Wilderspin, an' he's painted me many's the time, an' a rare rum 'un he is too. Dordi! it makes me laugh to think on him. Most Gorgios is mad, more or less, but he's the maddest 'un I ever know'd."

We had by this time got close to the painter's companion, who, sitting upright on his camp-stool, was busy with his brush. Without shifting his head to look at us, or removing his eyes from his work, he said, in a voice of striking power and volume: "Nothing but an imperfect experience of life, Lady Sinfi, could have made you pronounce our friend there to be the maddest Gorgio living."

"Dordi!" exclaimed Sinfi, turning sharply round in great astonishment. "Fancy seein' both on 'em here!"

"Mad our friend is, no doubt, Lady Sinfi," said the painter, without looking round, "but not so mad as certain illustrious Gorgios I could name, some of them born legislators and some of them (apparently) born R.A.'s."

"Who should ha' thought of seein' 'em both here?" said Sinfi again.

"That," said the painter, without even yet turning to look at us or staying the movement of his brush, "is a remark I never make in a little dot of a world like this, Lady Sinfi, where I expect to see everybody everywhere. But, my dear Romany chi," he continued, now turning slowly round, "in passing your strictures upon the Gorgio world, you should remember that you belong to a very limited aristocracy, and that your remarks may probably fall upon ears of an entirely inferior and Gorgio convolution."

"No offence, I hope," said Sinfi.

"Offence in calling the Gorgios mad? Not the smallest, save that you have distinctly plagiarized from me in your classification of the Gorgio race."

His companion called out again. "Just one moment! Do come and look at the position of this tree."

"In a second, Wilderspin, in a second," said the other. "An old friend and myself are in the midst of a discussion."

"A discussion!" said the person addressed as Wilderspin. "And with whom, pray?"

"With Lady Sinfi Lovell,—a discussion as to the exact value of your own special kind of madness in relation to the tomfooleries of the Gorgio mind in general."

"Kekka! kekka!" said Sinfi, "you shouldn't have said that."

"And I was on the point of proving to her ladyship that in these days, when Art has become genteel, and even New Grub Street 'decorates' her walls—when success means not so much painting fine pictures as building fine houses to paint in—the greatest compliment you can pay to a man of genius is surely to call him either a beggar or a madman."

The peculiarity of this "chaff" was that it was uttered in a simple and serious tone, in which not the faintest tinge of ironical intent was apparent. The other artist looked across and said: "Dear me! Sinfi Lovell! I am pleased to see you, Sinfi. I will ask you for a sitting to-morrow. A study of your head would be very suggestive among the Welsh hills."

The man who had been "chaffing" Sinfi then rose and walked towards his Quaker-like companion, and I had an opportunity of observing him fully. I saw that he was a spare man, wearing a brown velvet coat and a dark felt hat. The collar of the coat seemed to have been made carefully larger than usual, in order to increase the apparent width of his chest. His hair was brown and curly, but close cut. His features were regular, perhaps handsome. His complexion was bright,—fair almost,—rosy in hue, and his eyes were brown.

He shook hands with Sinfi as he passed us, and gave me a glance of that rapid and all-comprehending kind which seems to take in, at once, a picture in its every detail.

"What do you think of him?" said Sinfi to me, as he passed on and we two sat down on the grass by the side of the stream.

"I am puzzled," I replied, "to know whether he is a young man who looks like a middle-aged one, or a middle-aged man who looks like a young one. How's his hair under the hat?"

"Thinnish atop," said Sinfi, laconically.

"And I'm puzzled," I added, still looking at him as he walked over the grass, "as to whether he's a little man who looks middle-sized, or a middle-sized man who looks little."

"He's a little big 'un," said Sinfi; "about the height o' Rhona Bozzell's Tarno Rye."

"Altogether he puzzles me, Sinfi!"

"He puzzled me same way at fust."

What was it that made me take an interest so strange, strong, and sudden in this man? Without a hint of hair upon his face, while juvenile curls clustered thick and short beneath his wide-awake, he had at first struck me as being not much more than a lad, till, as he gave me that rapid, searching glance in passing, I perceived the little crow's feet round his eyes, and he then struck me immediately as being probably on the verge of thirty-five. His figure was slim and thin, his waist almost girlish in its fall. I should have considered him small had not the unusually deep, loud, manly, and sonorous voice with which he had accosted Sinfi conveyed an impression of size and weight such as even big men do not often produce. This deep voice, coupled with that gaunt kind of cheek which we associate with the most demure people, produced an effect of sedateness such as I should have expected to find (and did *not* find) in the other man—the man of the shaven cheek and Quaker costume; but, in the one glance I had got from those watchful, sagacious, twinkling eyes, there was an expression quite peculiar to them, quite inscrutable, quite indescribable.

## II.

"CAN you reckon him up, brother?" said Sinfi, taking my meerschaum from my lips to refill it for me, as she was fond of doing.

"No."

"Nor I nuther," said Sinfi. "Nor I can't pen his dukker-in' nuther, though often's the time I've tried it."

During this time the two friends seemed to have finished their colloquy upon "composition"; for they both came up to us. Sinfi rose; I sat still on the grass, smoking my pipe, listening to the chatter of the water as it rushed over the rocks. By this time my curiosity in the younger man had died away. My mind was occupied with the dream-picture

of a little blue-eyed girl struggling with a wounded heron. I had noticed, however, that he of the piercing eyes did not look at me again, having entirely exhausted at a glance such interest as I had momentarily afforded him; while his companion seemed quite unconscious of my presence as he stood there, his large, full, deep, brown eyes gazing apparently at something over my head, a long way off. Also I had noticed that "Visionary" was stamped upon this man's every feature—that he seemed an inspired baby of forty, talking there to his companion and to Sinfi, the sun falling upon his long, brown, curly hair, mixed with gray, which fell from beneath his hat, and floated around his collar like a mane.

When my reverie had passed, I found the artists trying to arrange with Sinfi to give an open-air sitting to one of them, the man addressed as Wilderspin. Sinfi seemed willing enough to come to terms; but I saw her look round at me as if saying to herself, "What am I to do with you?"

"I should like for my brother to sit too," I heard her say.

"Surely!" said Wilderspin. "Your brother would be a great gain to my picture."

Sinfi then came to me, and said that the painter wanted me to sit to him.

"But," said I in an undertone, "the Gorgios will certainly find out that I am no Romany."

"Not they," said Sinfi, "the Gorgios is sich fools. Why, bless you, a Gorgio ain't got eyes and ears like a Romany. You don't suppose as a Gorgio can hear or see or smell like a Romany can?"

"But you forget, Sinfi, that I am a Gorgio, and there are not many Romanies can boast of better senses than your brother Hal."

"Dordi!" said Sinfi, "that's jist like your mock-modesty. Your great-grandmother wur a Romany, and it's my belief that if you only went back fur enough, you'd find you had jist as good Romany blood in your veins as I have, and my daddy is a duke, you know, a real, reg'lar, out-an'-out Romany duke."

"I'm afraid you flatter me, sister," I replied. "However, let's try the Gorgios"; and I got up and walked with her close to the two sketchers.

Wilderspin was on the point of engaging me, when the other man, without troubling to look at me again, said:

"He's no more a Romany than I am."

"Ain't a Romany?" said Sinfi. "Who says my brother ain't a Romany? Where did you ever see a Gorgio with a skin like that?" she said, triumphantly pulling up my sleeve and exposing one of my wrists. "That aint sunburn, that's the real Romany brown, an' we's twinses, only I'm the biggest, an' we's the child'n of a duke, a real, reg'lar, out-an'-out Romany duke."

He gave a glance at the exposed wrist.

"As to the Romany brown," said he, "a little soap would often make a change in the best Romany brown—ducal or other."

"Why, look at his neck," said Sinfi, turning down my neckerchief; "is that sunburn, or is it Romany brown, I should like to know?"

"I assure you," said the speaker, still addressing her in the same grave, measured voice, "that the Romanies have no idea what a little soap can do with the Romany brown."

"Do you mean to say," cried Sinfi, now entirely losing her temper (for on the subject of Romany cleanliness she, the most cleanly of women, was keenly sensitive)—"do you mean to say as the Romany chals an' the Romany chies don't wash theirselves? I know what you fine Gorgios *do* say,—you're allus a-tellin' lies about us Romanies. Brother," she cried, turning now to me in a great fury, "I'm a duke's chavi, and mustn't fight no mumply Gorgios; why don't *you* take an' make his bed for him?"

And certainly the man's supercilious impertinence was beginning to irritate me.

"I should advise you to withdraw that about the soap," I said quietly, looking at him.

"Oh! and if I don't?"

"Why, then I suppose I must do as my sister bids," said I. "I must make your bed," pointing to the grass beneath his feet. "But I think it only fair to tell you that I am somewhat of a fighting man, which you probably are not."

"You mean? . . ." said he (turning round menacingly but with no more notion of how to use his fists than a lobster).

"I mean that we should not be fighting on equal terms," I said.

"In other words," said he, "you mean? . . ." and he came nearer.

"In other words, I mean that, judging from the way in

which you are advancing towards me now, the result of such an encounter might not tend to the honour and glory of the British artist in Wales."

"But," said he, "you are no Gypsy. Who are you?"

"My name is Henry Aylwin," said I; "and I must ask you to withdraw your words about the virtues of soap, as my sister objects to them."

"What?" cried he, losing for the first time his matchless *sang-froid*. "Henry Aylwin?" Then he looked at me in silent amazement, while an expression of the deepest humorous enjoyment overspread his features, making them positively shine as though oiled. Finally, he burst into a loud laugh, that was all the more irritating from the manifest effort he made to restrain it.

"Did I hear his Majesty of Gypsydom aright?" he said, as soon as his hilarity allowed him to speak. "Is the humble bed of a mere painter to be made for him by the representative of the proud Aylwins, the genteel Aylwins, the heir-presumptive Aylwins—the most respectable branch of a most respectable family, which, alas! has its ungenteel, its bohemian, its vulgar off-shoots? Did I hear his Majesty of Gypsydom aright?"

He leant against a tree, and gave utterance to peal after peal of laughter.

I advanced with rapidly rising anger, but his hilarity had so overmastered him that he did not heed it.

"Wilderspin," cried he, "come here! Pray come here. Have I not often told you the reason why I threw up my engagement with my theatrical manager, and missed my high vocation in ungenteel comedy? Have I not often told you that it sprang from no disrespect to my friends, the comic actors, but from the feeling that no comedian can hope to be comic enough to compete with the real thing—the true harlequinade of everyday life, roaring and screaming around me wherever I go?"

Then, without waiting for his companion's reply, he turned to me, and giving an added volume to his sonorous voice, said:

"And you, Sir King, do you know whose bed your Majesty was going to make at the bidding of—well, of a duke's chavi?"

I advanced with still growing anger.

"Stay, King Bamfylde, stay," said he; "shall the beds of

the mere ungenteel Aylwins, 'the outside Aylwins,' be made by the high Gypsy-gentility of Raxton?"

A light began to break in upon me. "Surely," I said, "surely you are not Cyril Aylwin, the ——?"

"Pray finish your sentence, sir, and say the low bohemian painter, the representative of the great ungenteel—the successor to the Aylwin peerage."

The other painter, looking in blank amazement at my newly-found kinsman's extraordinary merriment, exclaimed, "Bless me! Then you really can laugh aloud, Mr. Cyril. What has happened? What can have happened to make my dear friend laugh aloud?"

"Well he may ask," said Cyril, turning to me. "He knows that ever since I was a boy in jackets I have despised the man who, in a world where all is so comic, could select any particular point of the farce for his empty guffaw. But I am conquered at last. Let me introduce you, Wilderspin, to my kinsman, Henry Aylwin of Raxton Hall, alias Lord Henry Lovell of Little Egypt—one of Duke Panuel's interesting twinses."

But Wilderspin's astonishment, apparently, was not at the *rencontre*: it was at the spectacle of his companion's hilarity. "Wonderful!" he murmured, with his eyes still fastened upon Cyril. "My dear friend can laugh aloud. Most wonderful! What can have happened?"

This is what had happened. By one of those strange coincidences which make the drama of real life far more wonderful than the drama of any stage, I, in my character of wandering Gypsy, had been thrown across the path of the *bête noire* of my mother and aunt, Cyril Aylwin, a painter of bohemian proclivities, who (under the name of "Cyril") had obtained some considerable reputation. This kinsman of mine had been held up to me as a warning from my very childhood, though wherein lay his delinquencies I never did clearly understand, save that he had once been an actor—before acting had become genteel. Often as I had heard of this eccentric painter as the representative of the branch of the family which preceded mine in the succession to the coveted earldom, I had never seen him before.

He stood and looked at me in a state of intense amusement, but did not speak.

"So you are Cyril Aylwin?" I said. "Still you must withdraw what you said to my sister about the soap."

"Delicious!" said he, grasping my hand. "I had no idea that high gentility numbered chivalry among its virtues. Lady Sinfi," he continued, turning to her, "they say this brother of yours is a character, and, by Jove! he is. And as to you, dear lady, I am proud of the family connection. The man who has two Romany Rye kinsmen may be excused for showing a little pride. I withdraw every word about the virtues of soap, and am convinced that it can do nothing with the true Romany-Aylwin brown."

On that we shook hands all round. "But, Sinfi," said I, "why did you not tell me that this was my kinsman?"

"'Cause I didn't know," said she. "I han't never seed him since I've know'd you. I always heerd his friends call him Cyril, and so I used to call him Mr. Cyril."

"But, Lady Sinfi, my Helen of Little Egypt," said Cyril, "suppose that in my encounter with my patrician cousin—an encounter which would have been entirely got up in honour of you—suppose it had happened that I had made your brother's bed for him?"

"You make *his* bed!" exclaimed Sinfi, laughing. "Dordi! how you would ha' went down afore the Swimmin' Rei!"*

"But suppose that, on the contrary, he had gone down before me," said Cyril; "suppose I had been the death of your Swimming Rei, I should have been tried for the wilful murder of a prince of Little Egypt, the son of a Romany duke. Why, Helen of Troy was not half so mischievous a beauty as you."

"You was safe enough, no fear," said Sinfi. "It 'ud take six o' you to settle the Swimmin' Rei."

I found that Cyril and his strange companion were staying at the "Royal Oak," at Bettws y Coed. They asked me to join them, but when I told them I "could not leave my people, who were encamped about two miles off," Cyril again looked at me with an expression of deepest enjoyment, and exclaimed "Delightful creature."

Turning to Sinfi, he said: "Then we'll go with you and call upon the noble father of the twins, my old friend King Panuel."

"He ain't a king," said Sinfi modestly, "he's only a duke."

* By the Welsh Gypsies, but few of whom can swim, I was called "the Swimmin' Rei," a name which would have been far more appropriately given to Percy Aylwin (Rhona Boswell's lover), one of the strongest swimmers in England; but he was simply called the Tarno Rye (the young gentleman.)

"You'll give us some tea, Lady Sinfi?" said Cyril. "No tea equal to Gypsy tea."

"Romany tea, Mr. Cyril," replied Sinfi, with perfect dignity and grace. "My daddy, the duke, will be pleased to welcome you."

We all strolled towards the tents. I offered to carry an umbrella and a camp-stool. Cyril walked briskly away with Sinfi, leaving me to get on with Wilderspin as best I could. Before the other two were out of earshot, however, I heard Cyril say:

"You shouldn't have taken so seriously my chaff about the soap, Sinfi. You ought to know me better by this time than to think that I would really insult you."

"How you would ha' went down afore the Swimmin' Rei!" replied Sinfi regretfully.

## III.

Between my new companion, Wilderspin, and myself there was an awkward silence for some time. He was evidently in a brown study. I had ample opportunity for examining his face. Deeply impressed upon his forehead there was, as I now perceived, an ancient scar of a peculiar shape. At last, a lovely bit of scenery broke the spell, and conversation began to flow freely.

We had nearly got within sight of the encampment when he said:

"I am in some perplexity, sir, about the various branches of your family. Aylwin, I need not tell you, was the name of the greatest man of this age, and I am anxious to know what is exactly your connection with him."

"You surprise me," I said. "Out of our own family, in its various branches, there is, I have been told, no very large number of Aylwins, and I had no idea that one of them had become famous."

"I did not say famous, sir, but great; two very different words. Yet, in a certain deep sense, it may be said of Philip Aylwin's name that since his lamented death it has even become famous. The Aylwinians (of which body I am, as you are no doubt aware, founder and president) are, I may say, becoming——"

"Philip Aylwin!" I said. "Why, that was my father. He famous!"

The recollection of the essay upon "Hamalet and Hamlet," the thought of the brass-rubbings, the knee-caps and mittens, came before me in an irresistibly humorous light, and I could not repress a smile. Then arose upon me the remembrance of the misery that had fallen upon Winnie and myself from his monomania and what seemed to me his superstitious folly, and I could not withhold an angry scowl. Then came the picture of the poor scarred breast, the love-token and the martyrdom that came to him who had too deeply loved, and smile and frown both passed from my face as I murmured,—"Poor father! he famous!"

"Philip Aylwin's son!" said Wilderspin, staring at me. Then, raising his hat as reverentially to me as if I had been the son of Shakespeare himself, he said, "Mr. Aylwin, since Mary Wilderspin went home to heaven, the one great event of my life has been the reading of *The Veiled Queen*, your father's book of inspired wisdom upon the modern Renascence of Wonder in the mind of Man. To apply his principles to Art, sir,—to give artistic rendering to the profound idea hinted at in the marvellous vignette on the title-page of his third edition,—has been, for some time past, the proud task of my life. And you are the great man's son! Astonishing! Although his great learning overwhelms my mind and appals my soul (whom, indeed, should it not overwhelm and appal?) there is not a pamphlet of his that I do not know intimately, almost by heart."

"Including the paper on 'Hamlet and Hamalet, and the wide region of Nowhere'?"

"Including that and everything."

"Did you know him, Mr. Wilderspin?"

"Not in the flesh; in the spirit, who knows him so well? Your mother I have had the pleasure of meeting at the house of Lord Sleaford, and indeed I have had the distinguished honour of painting her portrait, but the great author of *The Veiled Queen*,—the inspired designer of the vignette symbolical of the Renascence of Wonder in Art—I never had the rapture of seeing. This very day, the anniversary of his birth," he continued, "is a great day in the Aylwinian calendar."

"My father's birthday? Why, so it is!"

"Mr. Aylwin, is it possible that the anniversary of a day

so momentous for the world is forgotten—forgotten by the very issue of the great man's loins?"

"The fact is," said I, in some confusion, "I have been living with the Gypsies, and, you see, Mr. Wilderspin, the passage of time——"

"The son of Philip Aylwin a Gypsy!" murmured Wilderspin meditatively, and unconscious evidently that he was speaking aloud—"a Gypsy! Still it would surely be a mistake to suppose," he continued, perfectly oblivious now of my presence, "that the vagaries of the son can really bring shame upon the head of the father."

"But, by God!" I cried, "it is no mistake that the vagaries of the father can bring shame and sorrow and misery upon the child. I could name a couple of fathers—sleeping very close to each other now—whose vagaries——"

My sudden anger was carrying me away; but I stopped, recollecting myself.

"Doubtless," said Wilderspin, "there are fathers and fathers. The son of Philip Aylwin has assuredly a right to be critical in regard to all other fathers than his own."

I looked in his face; the expression of solemn earnestness was quite unmistakable.

"It is not you," I said "it is Heaven, or else it is the blind jester Circumstance, that is playing this joke upon me!"

"To your honoured father," he continued, taking not the smallest notice of my interjection, "I owe everything. From his grave he supports my soul; from his grave he gives me ideas; from his grave he makes my fame. How should I fail to honour his son, even though he——"

Of course he was going to add,—"even though he be a vagabond associating with vagabonds,"—but he left the sentence unfinished.

"I confess, Mr. Wilderspin," said I, "that you speak in such enigmas that it would be folly for me to attempt to answer you."

"I wish," said Wilderspin, "that all enigmas were as soluble as this. Let me ask you a question, sir. When you stood before my picture, 'Faith and Love,' in Bond Street, did you not perceive that both it and the predella were inspired entirely by your father's great work, *The Veiled Queen*, or rather that they are mere pictorial renderings and illustrations of that grand effort of man's soul in its loftiest development?"

I had never heard of the picture in question. As for the book, my father, perceiving my great dislike of mysticism, had always shrunk from showing me any effusion of his that was not of a simply antiquarian kind. In Switzerland, however, after his death, while waiting for the embalmer to finish his work, I had become, during a few days' reading, acquainted with *The Veiled Queen.* It was a new edition containing an "added chapter," full of subtle spiritualistic symbols. Amid what had seemed to me mere mystical jargon about the veil of Isis being uplifted, not by Man's reason, not by such researches as those of Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, and the continental evolutionists, but by Faith and Love, I had come across passages of burning eloquence.

"I am sorry to say," I replied, "that my Gypsy wanderings are again answerable for my shortcomings. I have not yet seen your picture. When I do see it I——"

"Not seen 'Faith and Love' and the equally wonderful predella at the foot of it?" he exclaimed incredulously. "Ah, but you have been living among the Gypsies. It is the greatest picture of the modern world; for, Mr. Aylwin, it renders in Art the inevitable attitude of its own time and country towards the unseen world, and renders it as completely as did the masterpiece of Polygnotus in the Lesche of the Cnidians at Delphi—as completely as did the wonderful frescoes of Andrea Orcagna on the walls of the Campo Santo at Pisa."

"And you attribute your success to the inspiration you derived from my father's book?"

"To that and to the spirit of Mary Wilderspin in heaven."

"Then you are a Spiritualist?"

"I am an Aylwinian, the opposite (need I say?) of a Darwinian."

"Of the school of Blake, perhaps?" I asked.

"Of the school of Blake? No. He was on the right road; but he was a writer of verses! Art is a jealous mistress, Mr. Aylwin: the painter who rhymes is lost. Even the master himself is so much the weaker by every verse he has written. I never could make a rhyme in my life, and have faithfully shunned printer's ink, the black blight of the painter. I am my own school; the school of the spirit world."

"I am very curious," I said, "to know in what way my father and the spirits can have inspired a great painter. Of

the vignette I may claim to know something. Of the spirits as artists I have of course no knowledge, but as regards my father, he, I am certain, could hardly have told a Raphael from a chromo-lithograph copy. He was, in spite of that same vignette, most ignorant of art. Raxton Hall possesses nothing but family portraits."

## IV.

By this time we had reached the encampment, which was close by a waterfall among ferns and wild-flowers. Little Jerry Lovell, a child of about four years of age, came running to meet me with a dead water-wagtail in his hand which he had knocked down.

"Me kill de Romany Chiriklo," said he, and then proceeded to tell me very gravely that, having killed the "Gypsy magpie," he was bound to have a great lady for his sweetheart.

"Jerry," said I bitterly, "you begin with love and superstition early; you are an incipient 'Aylwinian': take care."

When I explained to Wilderspin that this was one of the Romany beliefs, he said that he did not at present see the connection between a dead water-wagtail and a live lady, but that such a connection might doubtless exist. Panuel Lovell now came forward to greet and welcome Wilderspin. Sinfi and Cyril had evidently walked at a brisk rate, for already tea was spread out on a cloth. The fire was blazing beneath a kettle slung from the "kettle-prop." The party were waiting for us. Sinfi, however, never idle, was filling up the time by giving lessons in riding to Euri and Sylvester Lovell, two dusky urchins in their early teens, while her favourite bantam-cock Pharaoh, standing on a donkey's back, his wattles gleaming like coral in the sun, was crowing lustily. Cyril, who lay stretched among the ferns, his chin resting in his hands and a cigarette in his mouth, was looking on with the deepest interest. As I passed behind him to introduce Wilderspin to Videy Lovell (who was making tea), I heard Cyril say:

"Lady Sinfi, you must and shall teach me how to make

an adversary's bed—the only really essential part of a liberal education."

"Brother," said Sinfi, turning to me, "your thoughts are a-flyin' off agin; keep your spirits up afore all these."

The leafy dingle was recalling Graylingham Wilderness and "Fairy Dell," where little Winifred used to play Titania to my childish Oberon, and dance the Gypsy "shawl-dance" Sinfi had taught her!

So much was I occupied with these reminiscences that I had not observed that during our absence our camp had been honoured by visitors. These were Jericho Boswell, christened, I believe, Jasper, his daughter Rhona, and James Herne, called on account of his accomplishments as a penman the Scollard. Although Jasper Boswell and Panuel Lovell were rival Griengoes, there was no jealousy between them—indeed, they were excellent friends.

There were many points of similarity between their characters. Each had risen from comparative poverty to what might be called wealth, and risen in the same way, that is to say, by straightforward dealing with the Gorgios, although as regarded Jericho, Rhona was generally credited with having acted as a great auxiliary in amassing his wealth. All over the country the farmers and horse-dealers knew that neither Jasper nor Panuel ever bishoped a gry, or indulged in any other horse-dealing tricks. Their very simplicity of character had done what all the crafty tricks of certain compeers of theirs had failed to do. They were also very much alike in their good-natured and humorous way of taking all the ups and downs of life.

A very different kind of Romany was the Scollard, so different, indeed, that it was hard to think that he was of the same race: Romany guile incarnate was the Scollard. He suggested even in his personal appearance the typical Gypsy of the novel and the stage, rather than the true Gypsy as he lives and moves. The Scollard was well known to be half-crazed with a passion for Rhona Boswell, who was the *fiancée* of that cousin of mine, Percy Aylwin, before mentioned. Percy was considered to be a hopelessly erratic character. Much against the wish of his parents, he had been brought up as a sailor; but on seeing Rhona Boswell he promptly fell in love with her, and quitted the sea in order to be near her. And no man who ever heard Rhona's laugh professed to wonder at Percy's infatuation. As a

Griengro her father, Jericho Boswell, who had no son, was said to have owed his prosperity to Rhona's instinctive knowledge of horseflesh.

While our guests, Romany and Gorgio, were doing justice to the trout, Welsh brown bread and butter and jam which Videy had spread before them, Sinfi went to the back of the camp to look at the ponies, and I got into conversation with Rhona Boswell, whom I remembered so well as a child. At first she was shy and embarrassed, doubtful, as I perceived, whether or not she ought to talk about Winnie. She waited to see whether I introduced the subject, and finding that I did not, she began to talk about Sinfi and plied me with questions as to what we two had been doing and where we had been during our wanderings through Wales.

When tea was over and Cyril was in lively talk with Sinfi, Wilderspin grew restless, and I perceived that he wanted to resume his conversation with me about his picture. I said to him: "This idea of my father's which has inspired you, and resulted in such great work, what is its nature?"

"I am a painter, Mr. Aylwin, and nothing more," he replied. "I could only express Philip Aylwin's ideas by describing my picture and the predella beneath it. Will you permit me to do so?"

"May I ask you," I said, "as a favour to do so?"

Immediately his face became very bright, and into his eyes returned the far-off look already described.

"I will first take the predella, which represents Isis behind the Veil," said he. "Imagine yourself thousands of years away from this time. Imagine yourself thousands of miles away, among real Egyptians."

"Real 'Gyptians!" cried Sinfi. "Who says the Romanies ain't real 'Gyptians? Anybody as says my daddy ain't a real 'Gyptian duke'll ha' to set to with Sinfi Lovell."

"Nonsense," said Cyril, smiling, and playing idly with a coral amulet dangling from Sinfi's neck; "he's talking about the ancient Egyptians: Egyptian mummies, you silly Lady Sinfi. You're not a mummy, are you?"

"Well, no, I ain't a mummy as fur as I knows on," said Sinfi, only half-appeased; "but my daddy's a 'Gyptian duke for all that,—ain't you, dad?"

"So it seems, Sin," said Panuel, "but I ommust begin to

wish I wasn't; it makes you feel so blazin' shy bein' a duke all of a suddent."

"Dabla!" said the guest, Jericho Boswell. "What, Pan, has she made a dook on ye?"

The Scollard began to grin.

"Pull that ugly mug o' yourn straight, Jim Herne," said Sinfi, "else I'll come and pull it straight for you."

Wilderspin took no notice of the interruption, but addressed me as though no one else were within earshot.

"Imagine yourself standing in an Egyptian city, where innumerable lamps of every hue are shining. It is one of the great lamp-fêtes of Sias, which all Egypt has come to see. There, in honour of the feast, sits a tall woman, covered by a veil. But the painting is so wonderful, Mr. Aylwin, that, though you see a woman's face expressed behind the veil—though you see the warm flesh-tints and the light of the eyes through the aërial film—you cannot judge of the character of the face—you cannot see whether it is that of woman in her noblest, or woman in her basest, type. The eyes sparkle, but you cannot say whether they sparkle with malignity or benevolence—whether they are fired with what Philip Aylwin calls 'the love-light of the seventh heaven,' or are threatening with 'the hungry flames of the seventh hell!' There she sits in front of a portico, while, asleep, with folded wings, is crouched on one side of her the figure of Love, with rosy feathers, and on the other the figure of Faith, with plumage of a deep azure. Over her head, on the portico, are written the words:—'I am all that hath been, is, and shall be, and no mortal hath uncovered my veil.' The tinted lights falling on the group are shed, you see, from the rainbow-coloured lamps of Sais, which are countless. But in spite of all these lamps, Mr. Aylwin, no mortal can see the face behind that veil. And why? Those who alone could uplift it, the figures with folded wings—Faith and Love—are fast asleep at the great Queen's feet. When Faith and Love are sleeping there, what are the many-coloured lamps of science?—of what use are they to the famished soul of man?"

"A striking idea!" I exclaimed.

"Your father's," replied Wilderspin, in a tone of such reverence that one might have imagined my father's spectre stood before him. "It symbolises that base Darwinian cosmogony which Carlyle spits at, and the great and good

John Ruskin scorns. But this design is only the predella beneath the picture 'Faith and Love.' Now look at the picture itself, Mr. Aylwin," he continued, as though it were upon an easel before me. "You are at Sais no longer: you are now, as the architecture around you shows, in a Greek city by the sea. In the light of innumerable lamps, torches, and wax tapers, a procession is moving through the streets. You see Isis, as Pelagia, advancing between two ranks, one of joyous maidens in snow-white garments, adorned with wreaths, and scattering from their bosoms all kinds of dewy flowers; the other of youths, playing upon pipes and flutes, mixed with men with shaven shining crowns, playing upon sistra of brass, silver, and gold. Isis wears a Dorian tunic, fastened on her breast by a tasselled knot, —an azure-coloured tunic bordered with silver stars,—and an upper garment of the colour of the moon at moonrise. Her head is crowned with a chaplet of sea-flowers, and round her throat is a necklace of seaweeds, wet still with sea-water, and shimmering with all the shifting hues of the sea. On either side of her stand the awakened angels, uplifting from her face a veil whose folds flow soft as water over her shoulders and over the wings of Faith and Love. A symbol of the true cosmogony which Philip Aylwin gave to the world!"

"Why, that's ezackly like the wreath o' seaweeds as poor Winnie Wynne used to make," said Rhona Boswell.

"The photograph of Raxton Fair!" I cried. "Frank and Winnie, and little Bob Milford, and the seaweeds!" The terrible past came upon my soul like an avalanche, and I leapt up and walked frantically towards my own waggon. The picture, which was nothing but an idealisation of the vignette upon the title-page of my father's book—the vignette taken from the photograph of Winnie, my brother Frank, and one of my fisher-boy playmates—brought back upon me—all!

Sinfi came to me.

"What is it, brother?" said she.

"Sinfi," I cried, "what was that saying of your mother's about fathers and children?"

"My poor mammy's daddy, when she wur a little chavi, beat her so cruel that she was a ailin' woman all her life, and she used to say, 'For good or for ill, you must dig deep to bury your daddy'."

I went back and resumed my seat by Wilderspin's side, while Sinfi returned to Cyril.

Wilderspin evidently thought that I had been overcome by the marvellous power of his description, and went on as though there had been no interruption.

"Isis," said he, "stands before you; Isis, not matronly and stern as the mother of Horus, nor as the Isis of the licentious orgies; but (as Philip Aylwin says) 'Isis, the maiden, gazing around her, with pure but mystic eyes.'"

"And you got from my father's book, *The Veiled Queen*, all this"—I was going to add,—"jumble of classic story and mediæval mysticism,"—but I stopped short in time.

"All this and more—a thousand times more than could be rendered by the art of any painter. For the age that Carlyle spits at and the great and good John Ruskin scorns is gross, Mr. Aylwin; the age is grovelling and gross. No wonder, then, that Art in our time has nothing but technical excellence; that it despises conscience, despises aspiration, despises soul, despises even ideas—that it is worthless, all worthless."

"Except as practised in a certain temple of art in a certain part of London that shall be nameless, whence Calliope, Euterpe, and all the rhythmic sisters are banished," interposed Cyril.

"But how did you attain to this superlative excellence, Mr. Wilderspin?" I asked.

"That would indeed be a long story to tell," said he. "Yet Philip Aylwin's son has a right to know all that I can tell. My dear friend here knows that, though famous now, I climbed the ladder of Art from the bottom rung; nay, before I could even reach the bottom rung, what a toilsome journey was mine to get within sight of the ladder at all! The future biographer of the painter of 'Faith and Love' will have to record that he was born in a hovel; that he was nursed in a smithy; that his cradle was a piece of board suspended from the smithy ceiling by a chain, which his mother—his widowed mother—kept swinging by an occasional touch in the intervals of her labours at the forge."

I did not even smile at this speech, so entirely was the effect of its egotism killed by the wonderful way of pronouncing the word "mother."

"You have heard," he continued in a voice whose in-

tense earnestness had an irresistible fascination for the ear, like that of a Hindoo charmer—"you have heard of the mother-bird who feeds her young from the blood of her own breast; that bird but feebly typifies her whom God, in His abundant love of me, gave me for a mother. There were ten of us—ten little children. My mother was a female blacksmith of Oldhill, who for four shillings and sixpence a week worked sixteen hours a day for the fogger, hammering hot iron into nails. The scar upon my forehead—look! it is shaped like the red-hot nail that one day leapt upon me from her anvil, as I lay asleep in my swing above her head. I would not lose it for all the diadems of all the monarchs of this world. She was much too poor to educate us. When the wolf is at the door, Mr. Aylwin, and the very flesh and blood of the babes in danger of perishing, what mother can find time to think of education, to think even of the salvation of the soul,—to think of anything but food—food? Have you ever wanted food, Mr. Aylwin?" he suddenly said in a voice so magnetic from its very earnestness, that I seemed for the moment to feel the faintness of hunger.

"No, no," I said, a tide of grief rushing upon me; "but there is one who perhaps—there is one I love more dearly than your mother loved her babes——"

Sinfi rose, and came and placed her hand upon my shoulder and whispered:

"She ain't a-starvin,' brother; she never starved on the hills. She's only jest a-beggin' her bread for a little while, that's all."

And then, after laying her hand upon my forehead, soft and soothing, she returned to Cyril's side.

"No one who has never wanted food knows what life is," said Wilderspin, taking but little heed of even so violent an interruption as this. "No one has been entirely educated, Mr. Aylwin—no one knows the real primal meaning of that pathetic word Man—no one knows the true meaning of Man's position here among the other living creatures of this world, if he has never wanted food. Hunger gives a new seeing to the eyes."

"That's as true as the blessed stars," muttered old Mrs. Boswell, Rhona's beloved granny, who was squatting on a rug next to her son Jericho, with a pipe in her mouth, weaving fancy baskets, and listening intently. "The very airth

under your feet seems to be a-sinkin' away, and the sweet sunshine itself seems as if it all belonged to the Gorgios, when you're a-follerin' the patrin with the emp'y belly."

"I thank God," continued Wilderspin, "that I once wanted food."

"More nor I do," muttered old Mrs. Boswell, as she went on weaving; "no mammy as ever felt a little chavo* a-suckin' at her burk† never thanked God for wantin' food; it dries the milk, or else it sp'iles it."

"In no way," said Wilderspin, "has the spirit-world neglected the education of the apostle of spiritual beauty. I became a 'blower' in the smithy. As a child, from early sunrise till nearly midnight, I blew the bellows for eighteenpence a week. But long before I could read or write my mother knew that I was set apart for great things. She knew, from the profiles I used to trace with the point of a nail on the smithy walls, that, unless the heavy world pressed too heavily upon me, I should become a great painter. Except anxiety about my mother and my little brothers and sisters, I, for my part, had no thought besides this of being some day a painter. Except love for her and for them, I had no other passion. By assiduous attendance at night-schools I learnt to read and write. This enabled me to take a better berth in Black Waggon Street, where I learned enough to take lessons in drawing from the reduced widow of a once prosperous fogger. But ah! so eager was I to learn, that I did not notice how my mother was fading, wasting, dying slowly. It was not till too late that I learnt the appalling truth, that while the babes had been nourished, the mother had starved—starved! On a few ounces of bread a day no woman can work the 'Olliver' and prod the fire. Her last whispers to me were, 'I shall see you, dear, a great painter yet; Jesus will let me look down and watch my boy.' Ah, Sinfi Lovell! that makes you weep. It is long, long since I ceased to weep at that. 'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.'"

Rhona Boswell, down whose face also the tears were streaming, nodded in a patronizing way to Wilderspin, and said, "Reia, my mammy lives in the clouds, and I'll tell her to show you the Golden Hand, I will."

"From the moment when I left my mother in the grave,"

*Child.
†Bosom.

said Wilderspin, "I had but one hope, that she who was watching my endeavours might not watch in vain. Art became now my religion: success in it my soul's goal. I went to London; I soon began to develop a great power of design, in illustrating penny periodicals. For years I worked at this, improving in execution with every design, but still unable to find an opening for a better class of work. What I yearned for was the opportunity to exercise the gift of colour. That I did possess this in a rare degree I knew. At last I got a commission. Oh! the joy of painting that first picture! My progress was now rapid. But I had few purchasers till Providence sent me a good man and great gentleman, my dear friend——"

"This is a long-winded speech of yours, *mon cher*," yawned Cyril. "Lady Sinfi is going to strike up with the Welsh fiddle unless you get along faster."

"Don't stop him," I heard Sinfi mutter, as she shook Cyril angrily; "he's mighty fond o' that mother o' his'n, an', if he's ever sich a born nataral, I likes him."

"I never exhibited in the Academy," continued Wilderspin, without heeding the interruption, "I never tried to exhibit; but, thanks to the dear friend I have mentioned, I got to know the Master himself. People came to my poor studio, and my pictures were bought from my easel as fast as I could paint them. I could please my buyers, I could please my dear friend, I could please the Master himself; I could please every person in the world but one—myself. For years I had been struggling with what cripples so many artists—with ignorance—ignorance, Mr. Aylwin, of the million points of detail which must be understood and mastered before ever the sweetness, the apparent lawlessness and abandonment of Nature can be expressed by Art. But it was now, when I had conquered these,—it was now that I was dissatisfied, and no man living was so miserable as I. I dare say you are an artist yourself, Mr. Aylwin, and will understand me when I say that artists—figure-painters, I mean—are divided into two classes—those whose natural impulse is to paint men, and those who are sent into the world expressly to paint women. My mother's death taught me that my mission was to paint women, women whom I—being the son of Mary Wilderspin—love and understand better than other men, because my soul (once folded in her womb) is purer than other men's souls."

"Is not modesty a Gorgio virtue, Lady Sinfi?" murmured Cyril.

"Nothin' like a painter for thinkin' strong beer of hisself," she replied; "but I likes him—oh, I likes him."

"No man whose soul is stained by fleshly desire shall render in art all that there is in a truly beautiful woman's face," said Wilderspin. "I worked hard at imaginative painting; I worked for years and years, Mr. Aylwin, but with scant success. It shames me to say that I was at last discouraged. But, after a time, I began to feel that the spirit-world was giving me a strength of vision second only to the Master's own, and a cunning of hand greater than any vouchsafed to man since the death of Raphael. This was once stigmatised as egotism; but 'Faith and Love,' and the predella 'Isis behind the Veil,' have told another story. I did not despair, I say; for I knew the cause of my failure. Two sources of inspiration were wanting to me —that of a superlative subject and that of a superlative model. For the first I am indebted to Philip Aylwin; for the second I am indebted to——"

"A greater still, Miss Gudgeon, of Primrose Court," interjected Cyril.

"For the second I'm indebted to my mother. And yet something else was wanting," continued Wilderspin, "to enable me for many months to concentrate my life upon one work—the self-sacrificing generosity of such a friend as I think no man ever had before."

"Wilderspin," said Cyril, rising, "the Duke of Little Egypt sleeps, as you see. His Grace of the Pyramids snores, as you hear. The autobiography of a man of genius is interesting; but I fear that yours will have to be continued in our next."

"But Mr. Aylwin wants to hear——"

"He and our other idyllic friends are early to bed and early to rise; they have, in the morning, trout to catch for breakfast, and we have a good way to walk to-night."

"That's just like my friend," said Wilderspin. "That's my friend all over.

With this they left us, and we betook ourselves to our usual evening occupations.

Next morning the two painters called upon us. Wilderspin sketched alone, while Sinfi, Rhona, Cyril and I went trout-fishing in one of the numerous brooks.

"What do you think of my friend by this time?" said Cyril to me.

"He is my fifth mystic," I replied; "I wonder what the sixth will be like. Is he really as great a painter as he takes himself to be, or does his art begin and end with flowery words?"

"I believe," said Cyril, pointing across to where Wilderspin sat at work, "that the strange creature under that white umbrella is the greatest artistic genius now living. The death of his mother by starvation has turned his head, poor fellow, but turned it to good purpose: 'Faith and Love' is the greatest modern picture in Europe. To be sure, he has the advantage of painting from the finest model ever seen, the lovely, if rather stupid, Miss Gudgeon, of Primrose Court, whom he monopolises."

Cyril had already, during the morning, told me that my mother, who was much out of health, was now staying in London, where he had for the first time in his life met her at Lord Sleaford's house. Notwithstanding their differences of opinion, my mother and he seemed to have formed a mutual liking. He also told me that my uncle Cecil Aylwin of Alvanley (who in this narrative must not, of course, be confounded with another important relative, Henry Aylwin, Earl of Aylwin) having just died and left me the bulk of his property, I had been in much request. I consequently determined to start for London on the following day, leaving my waggon in charge of Sinfi, who was to sit to Wilderspin in the open air.

During this conversation Sinfi was absorbed in her fishing, and wandered away up the brook, and I could see that Cyril's eyes were following her with great admiration.

Turning to me and looking at me, he said, "Lucky dog!" and then, looking again across at Sinfi, he said, "The finest girl in England."

# V.

# Haroun-al-Raschid, the Painter

# V.—HAROUN-AL-RASCHID, THE PAINTER

## I.

On reaching London and finding that it was necessary I should remain there for some little time, I wrote to Cyril to say so, sending some messages to Sinfi and her father about my own living-waggon.

My mother was now staying at my aunt's house, whither I went to call upon her shortly after my arrival in town.

Our meeting was a constrained and painful one. It was my mother's cruelty to Winifred that had, in my view, completely ruined two lives. I did not know then what an awful struggle was going on in her own breast between her pride and her remorse for having driven Winnie away, to be lost in Wales. Afterwards her sad case taught me that among all the agents of soul-torture that have ever stung mankind to madness the scorpion Remorse is by far the most appalling. But other events had to take place before she reached the state when the scorpion stings to death all other passions, even Pride and even Vanity, and reigns in the bosom supreme. We could hardly meet without softening towards each other. She was most anxious to know what had occurred to me since I left Raxton to search for Winnie. I gave her the entire story from my first seeing Winnie in the cottage, to my *rencontre* with her at Knockers' Llyn. At this time she had accidentally been brought into contact with Miss Dalrymple, who had lately received a legacy and was now in better circumstances. Miss Dalrymple had spoken in high terms of Winnie's intelligence and culture, little thinking how she was making my mother feel more acutely than ever her own wrongdoing. Knowing that I was very fond of music, my mother persuaded me to

take her on several occasions to the opera and the theatre. She with more difficulty persuaded me to consult a medical man upon the subject of my insomnia; and at last I agreed, though very reluctantly, to consult Dr. Mivart, late of Raxton, who was now living in London. Mivart attributed my ailment (as I, of course, knew he would) to hypochondria, and I saw that he was fully aware of the cause. I therefore opened my mind to him upon the subject. I told him everything in connection with Winifred in Wales.

He pondered the subject carefully and then said:

"What you need is to escape from these terrible oscillations between hope and despair. Therefore I think it best to tell you frankly that Miss Wynne is certainly dead. Even suppose that she did not fall down a precipice in Wales, she is, I repeat, certainly dead. So severe a form of hysteria as hers must have worn her out by this time. It is difficult for me to think that any nervous system could withstand a strain so severe and so prolonged."

I felt the terrible truth of his words, but I made no answer.

"But let this be your consolation," said he. "Her death is a blessing to herself, and the knowledge that she is dead will be a blessing to you."

"A blessing to me?" I said.

"I mean that it will save you from the mischief of these alternations between hope and despair. You will remember that it was I who saw her in her first seizure and told you of it. Such a seizure having lasted so long, nothing could have given her relief but death or magnetic transmission of the seizure. It is a grievous case, but what concerns me now is the condition into which you yourself have passed. Nothing but a successful effort on your part to relieve your mind from the dominant idea that has disturbed it can save you from—from——"

"From what?"

"That drug of yours is the most dangerous narcotic of all. Increase your doses by a few more grains and you will lose all command over your nervous system—all presence of mind. Give it up, give it up and enter Parliament."

I left Mivart in anger, and took a stroll through the streets, trying to amuse myself by looking at the shop windows and recalling the few salient incidents that were connected with my brief experiences as an art student.

Hours passed in this way, until one by one the shops were closed and only the theatres, public bars, and supper-rooms seemed to be open.

I turned into a restaurant in the Haymarket, for I had taken no dinner. I went upstairs into a supper-room, and after I had finished my meal, taking a seat near the window, I gazed abstractedly over the bustling, flashing streets, which to me seemed far more lonely, far more remote, than the most secluded paths of Snowdon. In a trouble such as mine it is not Man but Nature that can give companionship.

I was so absorbed in my thoughts that I did not observe whether I was or was not now alone in the room, till the name of Wilderspin fell on my ear and recalled me to myself. I started and looked round. At a table near me sat two men whom I had not noticed before. The face of the man who sat on the opposite side of the table confronted me.

If I had one tithe of that objective power and that instinct for description which used to amaze me in Winifred as a child, I could give here a picture of a face which the reader could never forget.

If it was not beautiful in detail it was illuminated by an expression that gave a unity of beauty to the whole. And what was the expression? I can only describe it by saying that it was the expression of genius; and it had that imperious magnetism which I had never before seen in any face save that of Sinfi Lovell. But striking as was the face of this man, I soon found that his voice was more striking still. In whatever assembly that voice was heard, its indescribable resonance would have marked it off from all other voices, and have made the ear of the listener eager to catch the sound. This voice, however, was not the one that had uttered the name of Wilderspin. It was from his companion, who sat opposite to him, with his great broad back, covered with a smart velvet coat, towards me, that the talk was now coming. This man was smoking cigarettes in that kind of furious sucking way which is characteristic of great smokers. Much smoking, however, had not dried up his skin to the consistence of blotting paper and to the colour of tobacco ash as it does in some cases, but tobacco juice, which seemed to ooze from his face like perspiration, or rather like oil, had made his complexion of a yellow-green colour, something like a vegetable marrow.

Although his face was as hairless as a woman's, there was not a feature in it that was not masculine. Although his cheek bones were high and his jaw of the mould which we so often associate with the prizefighter, he looked as if he might somehow be a gentleman. And when I got for a moment a full view of his face as he turned round, I thought it showed power and intelligence, although his forehead receded a good deal, a recession which was owing mainly to the bone above the eyes. Power and intelligence too were seen in every glance of his dark bright eyes. In a few minutes Wilderspin's name was again uttered by this man, and I found he was telling anecdotes of the eccentric painter—telling them with great gusto and humour, in a loud voice, quite careless of being overhead by me. Then followed other anecdotes of other people—artists for the most part—in which the names of Millais, Ruskin, Watts, Leighton, and others came up in quick succession.

That he was a professional anecdote-monger of extraordinary brilliancy, a *raconteur* of the very first order, was evident enough. I found also that as a story-teller he was reckless and without conscience. He was, I thought, inventing anecdotes to amuse his companion, whose manifest enjoyment of them rather weakened the impression that his own personality had been making upon me.

After a while the name of Cyril Aylwin came up, and I soon found the man telling a story of Cyril and a recent escapade of his which I knew must be false. He then went rattling on about other people, mentioning names which, as I soon gathered, were those of female models known in the art world. The anecdotes he told of these were mostly to their disadvantage. I was about to move to another table, in order to get out of earshot of this gossip, when the name "Lady Sinfi" fell upon my ears.

And then I heard the other man—the man of the musical voice—talk about Lady Sinfi with the greatest admiration and regard. He wound up by saying, "By the bye, where is she now? I should like to use her in painting my new picture."

"She's in Wales; so Kiomi told me."

"Ah, yes! I remember she has an extraordinary passion for Snowdon."

"Her passion is now for something else, though."

"What's that?"

"A man."

"I never saw a girl so indifferent to men as Lady Sinfi."

"She is living at this moment as the mistress of a cousin of Cyril Aylwin."

My blood boiled with rage. I lost all control of myself. I longed to feel his face against my knuckles.

"That's not true," I said in a rather loud voice.

He started up, and turned round, saying in a hectoring voice, "What was that you said to me? Will you repeat your words?"

"To repeat one's words," I said quietly, "shows a limited vocabulary, so I will put it thus,—what you said just now about Sinfi Lovell being the mistress of Cyril Aylwin's cousin is a lie."

"You dare to give me the lie, sir? And what the devil do you mean by listening to our conversation?"

The threatening look that he managed to put into his face was so entirely histrionic that it made me laugh outright. This seemed to damp his courage more than if I had sprung up and shown fight.

The man had a somewhat formidable appearance, however, as regards build, which showed that he possessed more than average strength. It was the manifest genuineness of my laugh that gave him pause. And when I sat with my elbows on the table and my face between my palms, taking stock of him quietly, he looked extremely puzzled. The man of the musical voice sat and looked at me as though under a spell.

"I am a young man from the country," I said to him. "To what theatre is your histrionic friend attached? I should like to see him in a better farce than this."

"Do you hear that, De Castro?" said the other. "What is your theatre?"

"If he is really excited," I said, "tell him that people at a public supper-room should speak in a moderate tone or their conversation is likely to be overheard."

"Do you hear this young man from the country, De Castro?" said he. "You seem to be the Oraculum of the hay-fields, sir," he continued, turning to me with a delightfully humorous expression on his face. "Have you any other Delphic utterance?"

"Only this," I said, "that people who do not like being given the lie should tell the truth."

"May I be permitted to guess your Christian name, sir? Is it Martin, perchance?"

"Yes," I replied, "and my surname is Tupper." He then got up and laid his hand on the *raconteur's* shoulder, and said, "Don't be a fool, De Castro. When a man looks at another as the author of the *Proverbial Philosophy* is looking at you, he knows that he can use his fists as well as his pen."

"He gave me the lie. Didn't you hear?"

"I did, and I thought the gift as entirely gratuitous, *mon cher*, as giving a scuttleful of coals to Newcastle."

The anecdote-monger stood silent, quelled by this man's wit.

Then turning to me, the man of the musical voice said, "I suppose you know something about my friend, Lady Sinfi?"

"I do," I said, "and I am Cyril Aylwin's cousin, so perhaps, as every word your friend has said about Sinfi Lovell and me is false, you will allow me to call him a liar."

A look of the greatest glee at the discomfiture of his companion overspread his face.

"Certainly," he said with a loud laugh. "You may call him that, you may qualify the noun you have used with an adjective if the author of the *Proverbial Philosophy* can think of one that is properly descriptive and yet not too unparliamentary. So you are Cyril Aylwin's cousin. I have heard him," he said with a smile that he tried in vain to suppress, "I have heard Cyril expatiate on the various branches of the Aylwin family."

"I belong to the proud Aylwins," I said.

The twinkle in his eye made me adore him as he said—"The proud Aylwins. A man, who in a world like this, is proud and knows it, and is proud of confessing his pride, always interests me, but I will not ask you what makes the proud Aylwins proud, sir."

"I will tell you what makes me proud," I said; "my great-grandmother was a full-blooded Gypsy, and I am proud of the descent."

He came forward and held out his hand and said, "It is long since I met a man who interested me"—he gave a sigh—"very long; and I hope that you and I may become friends."

I grasped his hand and shook it warmly.

The anecdote-monger began talking at once about Sinfi, Wilderspin and Cyril Aylwin, speaking of them in the most

genial and affectionate terms. In a few minutes, without withdrawing a word he had said about either of them, he had entirely changed the spirit of every word. At first I tried to resist his sophistry, but it was not to be resisted. I ended by apologising to him for my stupidity in misunderstanding him.

"My dear fellow," said he, "not a word, not a word. I admired the way in which you stood up for absent friends. Didn't you, D'Arcy?"

At this the other broke out into another mellow laugh. "I did. How's your cousin, and how's Wilderspin?" he said, turning to me. "Did you leave them well?"

We soon began, all three of us, to talk freely together. Of course I was filled with curiosity about my new friends, especially about the liar. His extraordinary command of facial expression, coupled with the fact that he wore no hair on his face, made me at first think he was a great actor; but being at that time comparatively ignorant of the stage, I did not attempt to guess what actor it was. After a while his prodigious acuteness struck me more than even his histrionic powers, and I began to ask myself what Old Bailey barrister it was.

Turning at last to the one called D'Arcy, I said, "You are an artist; you are a painter?"

"I have been trying for many years to paint," he said.

"And you?" I said, turning to his companion.

"He is an artist too," D'Arcy said, "but his line is not painting—he is an artist in words."

"A poet?" I said in amazement.

"A romancer, the greatest one of his time unless it be old Dumas."

"A novelist?"

"Yes, but he does not write his novels, he speaks them."

De Castro, evidently with a desire to turn the conversation from himself and his profession, said, pointing to D'Arcy, "You see before you the famous painter Haroun-al-Raschid, who has never been known to perambulate the streets of London except by night, and in me you see his faithful vizier."

It soon became evident that D'Arcy for some reason or other had thoroughly taken to me—more thoroughly, I thought, than De Castro seemed to like, for whenever D'Arcy seemed to be on the verge of asking me to call

at his studio, De Castro would suddenly lead the conversation off into another channel by means of some amusing anecdote. However, the painter was not to be defeated in his intention; indeed I noticed during the conversation that although D'Arcy yielded to the sophistries of his companion, he did so wilfully. While he forced his mind, as it were, to accept those sophistries there seemed to be all the while in his consciousness a perception that sophistries they were. He ended by giving me his address and inviting me to call upon him.

"I am only making a brief stay in London," he said; "I am working hard at a picture in the country, but business just now calls me to London for a short time."

With this we parted at the door of the restaurant.

## II.

It was through the merest accident that I saw these two men again.

One evening I had been dining with my mother and aunt. I think I may say that I had now become entirely reconciled to my mother. I used to call upon her often, and at every call I could not but observe how dire was the struggle going on within her breast between pride and remorse. She felt, and rightly felt, that the loss of Winifred among the Welsh hills had been due to her harshness in sending the stricken girl away from Raxton, to say nothing of her breaking her word with me after having promised to take my place and watch for the exposure of the cross by the wash of the tides until the danger was certainly past.

But against my aunt I cherished a stronger resentment every day. She it was with her inferior intellect and insect soul who had in my childhood prejudiced my mother against me and in favour of Frank, because I showed signs of my descent from Fenella Stanley while Frank did not. She it was who first planted in my mother's mind the seeds of prejudice against Winnie as being the daughter of Tom Wynne.

The influence of such a paltry nature upon a woman of my mother's strength and endowments had always astonished as much as it had irritated me.

I had not learnt then what I fully learnt afterwards, that in this life it is mostly the dull and stupid people who dominate the clever ones—that it is, in short, the fools who govern the world.

I should, of course, never have gone to Belgrave Square at all had it not been to see my mother. Such a commonplace slave of convention was my aunt, that, on the evening I am now mentioning, she had scarcely spoken to me during dinner, because, having been detained at the solicitors', I had found it quite impossible to go to my hotel to dress for her ridiculous seven o'clock dinner.

When I found that my mother had actually taken this inferior woman into her confidence in regard to my affairs and told her all about Winnie and the cross, my dislike of her became intensified, and on this evening my mother very much vexed me in the drawing-room by taking the cross from a cabinet and saying to me:

"What is now to be done with this? All along the coast there are such notions about its value that to replace it in the tomb would be simple madness." I made no reply. "Indeed," she continued, looking at the amulet as she might have looked at a cobra uprearing its head to spring at her, "It must really be priceless. And to think that all this was to be buried in the coffin of——! It is your charge, however, and not mine."

"Yes, mother," I said, "it is my charge"; and taking up the cross I wrapped it in my handkerchief.

"Take the amulet and guard it well," she said, as I placed it carefully in the breast pocket of my coat.

"And remember," said my aunt, breaking into the conversation, "that the true curses of the Aylwins are and always have been superstition and love-madness."

"I should have added a third curse,—pride, aunt," I could not help replying.

"Henry," said she, pursing her thin lips, "you have the obstinacy and the courage of your race, that is to say, you have the obstinacy and the courage of ten ordinary men, and yet a man you are not—a man you will never be, if strength of character, and self-mastery and power to withstand the inevitable trials of life, go to the making of a man."

"Pardon me, aunt; but such trials as mine are beyond your comprehension."

"Are they, boy?" said she. "This fancy of yours for an insignificant girl—this boyish infatuation which with any other young man of your rank would have long ago exhausted itself and been forgotten—is a passion that absorbs your life. And I tremble for you: I tremble for the house you represent."

But I saw by the expression on my mother's face that my aunt had now gone too far. "Prue," she said, "your tremblings concerning my son and my family are, I assure you, gratuitous. Such trembling as the case demands you had better leave to me. My heart tells me I have been very wrong to that poor child, and I would give much to know that she was found and that she was well."

I set out to walk to my hotel, wondering how I was to while away the long night until sleep should come to relieve me. Suddenly I remembered D'Arcy, and my promise to call upon him. I changed my course, and hailing a hansom drove to the address he had given me.

When I reached the door I found, upon looking at my watch, that it was late—so late that I was dubious whether I should ring the bell. I remembered, however, that he told me how very late his hours were, and I rang.

On sending in my card I was shown at once into the studio, and after threading my way between some pieces of massive furniture and pictures upon easels, I found D'Arcy rolling lazily upon a huge sofa. Seeing that he was not alone, I was about to withdraw, for I was in no mood to meet strangers. However, he sprang up and introduced me to his guest, whom he called Symonds, an elegant-looking man in a peculiar kind of evening dress, who, as I afterwards learnt, was one of Mr. D'Arcy's chief buyers. This gentleman bowed stiffly to me.

He did not stay long; indeed, it was evident that the appearance of a stranger somewhat disconcerted him.

After he was gone D'Arcy said, "A good fellow! One of my most important buyers. I should like you to know him, for you and I are going to be friends, I hope."

"He seems very fond of pictures," I said.

"A man of great taste, with a real love of art and music."

In a little while after this gentleman's departure in came De Castro, who had driven up in a hansom. I certainly saw a flash of anger in his eyes as he recognised me, but it

vanished like lightning, and his manner became cordiality itself. Late as it was (it was nearly twelve), he pulled out his cigarette case, and evidently intended to begin the evening. As soon as he was told that Mr. Symonds had been in, he began to talk about him in a disparaging manner. Evidently his *métier* was, as I had surmised, that of a professional talker. Talk was his stock-in-trade.

The night wore on and De Castro in the intervals of his talk kept pulling out his watch. It was evident that he wanted to be going, but was reluctant to leave me there. For my part I frequently rose to go, but on getting a sign from D'Arcy that he wished me to stay I sat down again. At last D'Arcy said:

"You had better go now, De Castro, you have kept that hansom outside for more than an hour and a half; and besides, if you stay till daylight our friend here will stay longer, for I want to talk with him alone."

De Castro got up with a laugh that seemed genuine enough, and left us.

D'Arcy, who was still on the sofa, then lapsed into a silence that became after a while rather awkward. He lay there, gazing abstractedly at the fireplace.

"Some of my friends call me, as you heard De Castro say the other night, Haroun-al-Raschid, and I suppose I am like him in some things. I am a bad sleeper, and to be amused by De Castro when I can't sleep is the chief of blessings. De Castro, however, is not so bad as he seems. A man may be a scandal-monger without being really malignant. I have known him go out of his way to do a struggling man a service."

"You are a bad sleeper?" I said in a tone that proclaimed at once that I was a bad sleeper also.

"Yes," said he; "and so are you, as I noticed the other night. I can always tell. There is something in the eyes when a man is a bad sleeper that proclaims it to me."

Then springing up from the divan and laying his hand upon my shoulder, he said, "And you have a great trouble at the heart. You have had some great loss the effect of which is sapping the very fountains of your life. We should be friends. We must be friends. I asked you to call upon me because we must be friends."

His voice was so tender that I was almost unmanned.

I will not dwell upon this part of my narrative; I will

only say that I told him something of my story, and he told me his.

I told him that a terrible trouble had unhinged the mind of a young lady whom I deeply loved and that she had been lost on the Welsh hills. I felt that it was only right that I should know more of him before giving him the more intimate details connected with Winnie, myself, and the secrets of my family. He listened to every word with the deepest attention and sympathy. After a while he said:

"You must not go to your hotel to-night. A friend of mine who occupies two rooms is not sleeping here to-night, and I particularly wish for you to take his bed, so that I can see you in the morning. We shall not breakfast together. My breakfast is a peculiarly irregular meal. But when you wake ring your bedroom bell and order your own breakfast; afterwards we shall meet in the studio."

I did not in the least object to this arrangement, for I found his society a great relief.

Next morning, after I had finished my solitary breakfast, I asked the servant if Mr. D'Arcy had yet risen. On being told that he had not, I went downstairs into the studio where I had spend the previous evening. After examining the pictures on the walls and the easels, I walked to the window and looked out at the garden. It was large, and so neglected and untrimmed as to be a veritable wilderness. While I was marvelling why it should have been left in this state, I saw the eyes of some animal staring at me from the distance, and was soon astonished to see that they belonged to a little Indian bull. My curiosity induced me to go into the garden and look at the creature. He seemed rather threatening at first, but after a while allowed me to go up to him and stroke him. Then I left the Indian bull and explored this extraordinary domain. It was full of unkempt trees, including two fine mulberries, and surrounded by a very high wall. Soon I came across an object which, at first, seemed a little mass of black and white oats moving along, but I presently discovered it to be a hedgehog. It was so tame that it did not curl up as I approached it, but allowed me, though with some show of nervousness, to stroke its pretty little black snout. As I walked about the garden, I found it was populated with several kinds of animals such as are never seen except in menageries or in

the Zoölogical Gardens. Wombats, kangaroos, and the like, formed a kind of happy family.

My love of animals led me to linger in the garden. When I returned to the house I found that D'Arcy had already breakfasted, and was at work in the studio.

After greeting me with the greatest cordiality, he said:

"No doubt you are surprised at my menagerie. Every man has one side of his character where the child remains. I have a love of animals which, I suppose, I may call a passion. The kind of amusement they can afford me is like none other. It is the self-consciousness of men and women that makes them, in a general way, immensely unamusing. I turn from them to the unconscious brutes, and often get a world of enjoyment. To watch a kitten or a puppy play, or the funny antics of a parrot or a cockatoo, or the wise movements of a wombat, will keep me for hours from being bored."

"And children," I said—"do you like children?"

"Yes, so long as they remain like the young animals—until they become self-conscious, I mean, and that is very soon. Then their charm goes. Has it ever occurred to you how fascinating a beautiful young girl would be if she were as unconscious as a young animal? What makes you sigh?"

My thought had flown to Winifred breakfasting with her "Prince of the Mist" on Snowdon. And I said to myself. "How he would have been fascinated by a sight like that!"

My experience of men at that time was so slight that the opinion, then formed of D'Arcy as a talker was not of much account. But since then I have seen very much of men, and I find that I was right in the view I took of his conversational powers. When his spirits were at their highest he was without an equal as a wit, without an equal as a humorist. He had more than even Cyril Aylwin's quickness of repartee, and it was of an incomparably rarer quality. To define it would be, of course, impossible, but I might perhaps call it poetic fancy suddenly stimulated at moments by animal spirits into rapid movements—so rapid, indeed, that what in slower movement would be merely fancy, in him became wit. Beneath the coruscations of this wit a rare and deep intellect was always perceptible.

His humour was also so fanciful that it seemed poetry at play, but here was the remarkable thing: although he was

not unconscious of his other gifts, he did not seem to be in the least aware that he was a humorist of the first order; every *jeu d'esprit* seemed to leap from him involuntarily, like the spray from a fountain.

While he was talking he kept on painting, and I said to him, "I can't understand how you can keep up a conversation while you are at work."

I took care not to tell him that I was an amateur painter myself.

"It is only when the work that I am on is in some degree mechanical that I can talk while at work. These flowers, which were brought to me this morning for my use in painting this picture, will very soon wither, and I can put them into the picture without being disturbed by talk; but if I were at work upon this face, if I were putting dramatic expression into these eyes, I should have to be silent."

He then went on talking upon art and poetry, letting fall at every moment gems of criticism that would have made the fortune of a critic.

After a while, however, he threw down the brush and said:

"Sometimes I can paint with another man in the studio; sometimes I can't."

I rose to go.

"No, no," he said; "I don't want you to go, yet I don't like keeping you in this musty studio on such a morning. Suppose we take a stroll together."

"But you never walk out in the daytime."

"Not often; indeed, I may say never, unless it is to go to the Zoo, or to Jamrach's, which I do about once in three months."

"Jamrach's!" I said. "Why, he's the importer of animals, isn't he? Of all places in London that is the one I should should most like to see. If I can call myself anything at all, it is a naturalist."

"We will go," said D'Arcy; and we left the house.

In Maud Street a hansom passed us; D'Arcy hailed it.

"We will take this to the Bank," said he, "and then walk through the East End to Jamrach's. Jump in."

As we drove off, the sun was shining brilliantly, and London seemed very animated—seemed to be enjoying itself. Until we reached the Bank our drive was through all the most cheerful-looking and prosperous streets of London. It acted like a tonic on me, and for the first time since my

trouble I felt really exhilarated. As to D'Arcy, after we had left behind us what he called the "stucco world" of the West End, his spirits seemed to rise every minute, and by the time we reached the Strand he was as boisterous as a boy on a holiday.

On reaching the Bank we dismissed the hansom, and proceeded to walk to Ratcliffe Highway. Before reaching it I was appalled at the forbidding aspect of the neighbourhood. It was not merely that the unsavoury character of the streets offended and disgusted me, but the locality wore a sinister aspect which acted upon my imagination in the strangest, wildest way. Why was it that this aspect fairly cowed me, scared me? I felt that I was not frightened on my own account, and yet when I asked myself why I was frightened I could not find a rational answer.

As I saw the sailors come noisily from their boarding-houses; as I saw the loafers standing at the street corners, smoking their dirty pipes and gazing at us; as I saw the tawdry girls, bare-headed or in flaunting hats covered with garish flowers, my thoughts, for no conceivable reason, ran upon Winnie more persistently than they had run upon her since I had abandoned all hope of seeing her in Wales.

The thought came to me that, grievous as was her fate and mine, the tragedy of our lives might have been still worse.

"Suppose," I said, "that instead of being lost in the Welsh hills she had been lost here!" I shuddered at the thought.

Again that picture in the Welsh pool came to me, the picture of Winnie standing at a street corner, offering matches for sale. D'Arcy then got talking about Sinfi Lovell and her strange superiority in every respect to the few Gypsy women he had seen.

"She has," said he, "mesmeric power; it is only semi-conscious, but it is mesmeric. She exercises it partly through her gaze and partly through her voice."

He was still talking about Sinfi when a river-boy, who was whistling with extraordinary brilliancy and gusto, met and passed us. Not a word more of D'Arcy's talk did I hear, for the boy was whistling the very air to which Winnie used to sing the Snowdon song:—

> I once did meet a lone little maid
> At the foot of y Wyddfa the white.

I ran after the boy and asked him what tune he was whistling.

"What tune?" he said, "blowed if I know."

"Where did you hear it?" I asked.

"Well, there used to be a gal, a kind of a beggar gal, as lived not far from 'ere for a little while, but she's gone away now, and she used to sing that tune. I allus remember tunes, but I never could make out anything of the words."

D'Arcy laughed at my eccentricity in running after the boy to learn where he had got a tune. But I did not tell him why.

After we had passed some way down Ratcliffe Highway, D'Arcy said, "Here we are then," and pointed to a shop, or rather two shops, on the opposite side of the street. One window was filled with caged birds; the other with specimens of beautiful Oriental pottery and grotesque curiosities in the shape of Chinese and Japanese statues and carvings.

My brain still rang with the air I had heard the river-boy whistling, but I felt that I must talk about something.

"It is here that you buy your wonderful curiosities and porcelain!" I said.

"Partly; but there is not a curiosity shop in London that I have not ransacked in my time."

The shop we now entered reminded me of that Raxton Fair which was so much associated with Winnie. Its chief attraction was the advent of Wombwell's menagerie. From the first moment that the couriers of that august establishment came to paste their enormous placards on the walls, down to the sad morning when the caravans left the market-place, Winnie and I and Rhona Boswell had talked "Wombwell." It was not merely that the large pictures of the wild animals in action, the more than brassy sound of the cracked brass band, delighted our eyes and ears. Our olfactories also were charmed. The mousy scent of the animals mixed with the scent of sawdust, which to adults was so objectionable, was characterised by us as delicious. All these Wombwell delights came back to me as we entered Jamrach's, and for a time the picture of Winifred prevented my seeing the famous shop. When this passed I saw that the walls of the large room were covered from top to bottom with cages, some of them full of wonderful or beautiful birds, and others full of evil-faced, screeching monkeys.

While D'Arcy was amusing himself with a blue-faced rib-

nosed baboon, I asked Mr. Jamrach, an extremely intelligent man, about the singing girl and the Welsh air. But he could tell me nothing, and evidently thought I had been hoaxed.

In a small case by itself was a beautiful jewelled cross, which attracted D'Arcy's attention very much.

"This is not much in your line," he said to Jamrach. "This is European."

"It came to me from Morocco," said Jamrach, "and it was no doubt taken by a Morocco pirate from some Venetian captive."

"It is a ruby cross," said D'Arcy, "but mixed with the rubies there are beryls. The setting of the stones is surely quite peculiar."

"Yes," said Jamrach. "It is the curiosity of the setting more than the value of the gems which caused it to be sent to me. I have offered it to the London jewellers, but they will only give me the market-price of the stones and the gold."

While he was talking I pulled out of my breast pocket the cross, which had remained there since I received it from my mother the evening before.

"They are very much alike," said Jamrach; "but the setting of these stones is more extraordinary than in mine. And of course they are more than fifty times as valuable."

D'Arcy turned round to see what we were talking about, when he saw the cross in my hand, and an expression of something like awe came over his face.

"The Moonlight Cross of the Gnostics!" he exclaimed, "you carry this about in your breast pocket? Put it away, put it away! The thing seems to be alive."

In a second, however, and before I could answer him, the expression passed from his face, and he took the cross from my hands and examined it.

"This is the most beautiful piece of jewel work I ever saw in my life. I have heard of such things. The Gnostic art of arranging jewels so that they will catch the moon-rays and answer them as though the light were that of the sun, is quite lost."

We then went and examined Jamrach's menagerie. I found that one source of the interest D'Arcy took in animals was that he was a believer in Baptista Porta's whimsical theory that every human creature resembles one of the lower

animals, and he found a perennial amusement in seeing in the faces of animals caricatures of his friends.

With a fund of humour that was exhaustless, he went from cage to cage, giving to each animal the name of some member of the Royal Academy, or of one of his own intimate friends.

On leaving Jamrach's he said to me, "Suppose we make a day of it and go to the Zoo?"

I agreed, and we took a hansom as soon as we could get one and drove across London towards Regent's Park.

Here the pleasure that he took in watching the movements of the animals was so great that it seemed impossible but that he was visiting the Zoo for the first time. I remembered, however, that he had told me in the morning how frequently he went to these gardens.

But his interest in the animals was unlike my own, and I should suppose unlike the interest of any other man. He had no knowledge whatever of zoölogy, and appeared to wish for none. His pleasure consisted in watching the curious expressions and movements of the animals and in dramatising them.

On leaving the Zoo, I said, "The cross you were just now looking at is as remarkable for its history as for its beauty. It was stolen from the tomb of a near relative of mine. I was under a solemn promise to the person upon whose breast it lay to see that it should never be disturbed. But, now that it has been disturbed, to replace it in the tomb would, I fear, be to insure another sacrilege. I wonder what you would do in such a case?"

He looked at me and said, "As it is evident that we are going to be intimate friends, I may as well confess to you at once that I am a mystic."

"When did you become so?"

"When? Ask any man who has passionately loved a woman and lost her; ask him at what moment mysticism was forced upon him—at what moment he felt that he must either accept a spiritualistic theory of the universe or go mad; ask him this, and he will tell you that it was at that moment when he first looked upon her as she lay dead, with Corruption's foul fingers waiting to soil and stain. What are you going to do with the cross?"

"Lock it up as safely as I can," I said; "what else is there to do with it?"

He looked into my face and said, "You are a rationalist."

"I am."

"You do not believe in a supernatural world?"

"My disbelief of it," I said, "is something more than an exercise of the reason. It is a passion, an angry passion. But what should *you* do with the cross if you were in my place?"

"Put it back in the tomb."

I had great difficulty in suppressing my ridicule, but I merely said, "That would be, as I have told you, to insure its being stolen again."

"There is the promise to the dead man or woman on whose breast it lay."

"This I intend to keep in the spirit like a reasonable man —not in the letter like——"

"Promises to the dead must be kept to the letter, or no peace can come to the bereaved heart. You are talking to a man who *knows!*"

"I will commit no such outrage upon reason as to place a priceless jewel in a place where I know it will be stolen."

"You *will* replace the cross in that tomb."

As he spoke he shook my hands warmly, and said, "*Au revoir.* Remember, I shall always be delighted to see you."

It was not till I saw him disappear amongst the crowd that I could give way to the laughter which I had so much difficulty in suppressing. What a relief it was to be able to do this!

# VI.

# The Song of Y Wyddfa

# VI.—THE SONG OF Y WYDDFA

## I.

After this I had one or two interviews with our solicitor in Lincoln's Inn Fields, upon important family matters connected with my late uncle's property.

* * * * * *

I had been one night to the theatre with my mother and my aunt. The house had been unusually crowded. When the performance was over, we found that the streets were deluged with rain. Our carriage had been called some time before it drew up, and we were standing under the portico amid a crowd of impatient ladies when a sound fell or seemed to fall on my ears which stopped for the moment the very movements of life. Amid the rattle of wheels and horses' feet and cries of messengers about carriages and cabs, I seemed to distinguish a female voice singing:

"I once did meet a lone little maid
At the foot of y Wyddfa the white;
Oh, lissome her feet as the mountain hind,
And darker her hair than the night!"

It was the voice of Winifred singing as in a dream.

I heard my aunt say:

"Do look at that poor girl singing and holding out her little baskets! She must be crazed to be offering baskets for sale in this rain and at this time of night."

I turned my eyes in the direction in which my aunt was looking, but the crowd before me prevented my seeing the singer.

"She is gone, vanished," said my aunt sharply, for my eagerness to see made me rude.

"What was she like?" I asked.

"She was a young slender girl, holding out a bunch of small fancy baskets of woven colours, through which the rain was dripping. She was dressed in rags, and through

the rags shone, here and there, patches of her shoulders; and she wore a dingy red handkerchief round her head. She stood in the wet and mud, beneath the lamp, quite unconscious apparently of the bustle and confusion around her."

Almost at the same moment our carriage drew up. I lingered on the step as long as possible. My mother made a sign of impatience at the delay, and I got into the carriage. Spite of the rain, I put down the window and leaned out. I forgot the presence of my mother and aunt. I forgot everything. The carriage moved on.

"Winifred!" I gasped, as the certainty that the voice was hers came upon me.

And the dingy London night became illuminated with scrolls of fire, whose blinding, blasting scripture seared my eyes till I was fain to close them: "Let his children be vagabonds, and beg their bread: let them seek it also out of desolate places."

So rapidly had the carriage rolled through the rain, and so entirely had my long pain robbed me of all presence of mind, that, by the time I had recovered from the paralysing shock, we had reached Piccadilly Circus. I pulled the check-string.

"Why, Henry!" said my mother, who had raised the window, "what are you doing? And what has made you turn so pale?"

My aunt sat in indignant silence.

"Ten thousand pardons," I said, as I stepped out of the carriage, and shook hands with them. "A sudden recollection—important papers unsecured at my hotel—business in —in Lincoln's Inn Fields. I will call on you in the morning."

And I reeled down the pavement towards the Haymarket. When I was some little distance from the carriage, I took to my heels and hurried as fast as possible towards the theatre, utterly regardless of the people. I reached the spot breathless. I stood for a moment staring wildly to right and left of me. Not a trace of her was to be seen. I heard a thin voice from my lips, that did not seem my own, ask a policeman, who was now patrolling the neighbourhood, if he had seen a basket-girl singing.

"No," said the man, "but I fancy you mean the Essex Street Beauty, don't you? I haven't seen her for a long while now, but her dodge used to be to come here on rainy

nights, and stand bare-headed and sing and sell just when the theatres was a-bustin'. She gets a good lot, I fancy, by that dodge."

"The Essex Street Beauty?"

"Oh, I thought you know'd p'raps. She's a strornary pretty beggar-wench, with blue eyes and black hair, as used to stand at the corner of Essex Street, Strand, and the money as that gal got a-holdin' out her matches and a-sayin' texes out of the Bible must ha' been strornary. So the Essex Street Beauty's bin about here agin on the rainy-night dodge, 'es she? Well, it must have been the fust time for many a long day, for I've never seen her now for a long time. She couldn't ha' stood about here for many minutes; if she had I must ha' seen her."

I staggered away from him, and passed and repassed the spot many times. Then I extended my beat about the neighbouring streets, loitering at every corner where a basket-girl or a flower-girl might be likely to stand. But no trace of her was to be seen. Meantime the rain had ceased.

All the frightful stories that I had heard or read of the kidnapping of girls came pouring into my mind, till my blood boiled and my knees trembled. Imagination was stinging me to life's very core. Every few minutes I would pass the theatre, and look towards the portico.

The night wore on and I was unconscious how the time passed. It was not till day-break that I returned to my hotel, pale, weary, bent.

I threw myself upon my bed: it scorched me.

I could not think. At present I could only see—see what? At one moment a squalid attic, the starlight shining through patched window-panes upon a lonely mattress, on which a starving girl was lying; at another moment a cellar damp and dark, in one corner of which a youthful figure was crouching; and then (most intolerable of all!) a flaring gin-palace, where, among a noisy crowd, a face was looking wistfully on, while coarse and vulgar men were clustering with cruel, wolfish eyes around a beggar-girl. This I saw and more—a thousand things more.

It was insupportable. I rose and again paced the street.

* * * * * *

When I called upon my mother she asked me anxious questions as to what had ailed me the previous night. See-

ing, however, that I avoided replying to them, she left me after a while in peace.

"Fancy," said my aunt, who was writing a letter at a little desk between two windows,—"fancy an Aylwin pulling the check-string, and then, with ladies in the carriage, and the rain pouring——"

During that day how many times I passed in front of the theatre I cannot say; but at last I thought the very men in the shops must be observing me. Again, though I half poisoned myself with my drug, I passed a sleepless night. The next night was passed in almost the same manner as the previous one.

## II.

From this time I felt working within me a great change. A horrible new thought got entire possession of me. Wherever I went I could think of nothing but—the curse. I scorned the monstrous idea of a curse, and yet I was always thinking about it. I was always seeking Winifred—always speculating on her possible fate. I saw no one in society.

My time was now largely occupied with wandering about the streets of London. I began by exploring the vicinity of the theatre, and day after day used to thread the alleys and courts in that neighbourhood. Then I took the eastern direction, and soon became familiar with the most squalid haunts.

My method was to wander from street to street, looking at every poorly-dressed girl I met. Often I was greeted with an impudent laugh, that brought back the sickening mental pictures I have mentioned; and often I was greeted with an angry toss of the head and such an exclamation as, "What d'ye take me for, staring like that?"

These peregrinations I used to carry far into the night, and thus, as I perceived, got the character at my hotel of a wild young man. The family solicitor wrote to me again and again for appointments which I could not give him.

It had often occurred to me that in a case of this kind the police ought to be of some assistance. One day I called at Scotland Yard, saw an official, and asked his aid. He

listened to my story attentively, then said: "Do you come from the missing party's friends, sir?"

"I am her friend," I answered—"her only friend."

"I mean, of course, do you represent her father or mother, or any near relative?"

"She is an orphan; she has no relatives," I said.

He looked at me steadily and said: "I am sorry, sir, that neither I nor a magistrate could do anything to aid you."

"You can do nothing to aid me?" I asked angrily.

"I can do nothing to aid you, sir, in identifying a young woman you once heard sing in the streets of London, with a lady you saw once on the top of Snowdon."

As I was leaving the office, he said: "One moment, sir. I don't see how I can take up this case for you, but I may make a suggestion. I have an idea that you would do well to pursue inquiries among the Gypsies."

"Gypsies!" I said with great heat, as I left the office. "If you knew how I had already 'pursued inquiries' among the Gypsies, you would understand how barren is your suggestion."

Weeks passed in this way. My aunt's ill-health became rather serious: my mother too was still very unwell. I afterwards learnt that her illness was really the result of the dire conflict in her breast between the old passion of pride and the new invader, remorse. There were, no doubt, many discussions between them concerning me. I could see plainly enough they both thought my mind was becoming unhinged.

One night, as I lay thinking over the insoluble mystery of Winifred's disappearance, I was struck by a sudden thought that caused me to leap from my bed. What could have led the official in Scotland Yard to connect Winifred with Gypsies? I had simply told him of her disappearance on Snowdon, and her reappearance afterwards near the theatre. Not one word had I said to him about her early relations with Gypsies. I was impatient for the daylight, in order that I might go to Scotland Yard again. When I did so and saw the official, I asked him without preamble what had caused him to connect the missing girl I was seeking with the Gypsies.

"The little fancy baskets she was selling," said he. "They are often made by Gypsies."

"Of course they are," I said, hurrying away. "Why did I not think of this?"

In fact I had, during our wanderings over England and Wales, often seen Sinfi's sister Videy and Rhona Boswell weaving such baskets. Winifred, after all, might be among the Gypsies, and the crafty Videy Lovell might have some mysterious connection with her; for she detested me as much as she loved the gold "balansers" she could wheedle out of me. Moreover, there were in England the Hungarian Gypsies, with their notions about demented girls, and the Lovells, owing to Sinfi's musical proclivities, were just now much connected with a Hungarian troupe.

# VII.

# Sinfi's Dukkeripen

# VII.—SINFI'S DUKKERIPEN

## I.

THE Gypsies I had never seen since leaving them in Wales, and I knew that by this time they were either making their circuit of the English fairs or located in a certain romantic spot called Gypsy Dell, near Rington Manor, the property of my kinsman Percy Aylwin, whither they often went after the earlier fairs were over.

The next evening I went to the Great Eastern Railway station, and taking the train to Rington I walked to Gypsy Dell, where I found the Lovells and Boswells.

Familiar as I was with the better class of Welsh Gypsies, the camp here was the best display of Romany well-being I had ever seen. It would, indeed, have surprised those who associate all Gypsy life with the squalor which in England, and especially near London, marks the life of the mongrel wanderers who are so often called Gypsies. In a lovely dingle, skirted by a winding, willow-bordered river, and dotted here and there with clumps of hawthorn, were ranged the "living-waggons" of those trading Romanies who had accompanied the "Gryengroes" to the East Anglian and Midland fairs.

Alongside the waggons was a single large brown tent that for luxuriousness might have been the envy of all Gyspydom. On the hawthorn bushes and the grass was spread, instead of the poor rags that one often sees around a so-called Gypsy encampment, snowy linen, newly washed. The ponies and horses were scattered about the Dell feeding.

I soon distinguished Sinfi's commanding figure near that gorgeous living-waggon of "orange-yellow colour with red window-blinds" in which she had persuaded me to invest my money at Chester. On the foot-board sat two urchins of the

Lovell family, "making believe" to drive imaginary horses, and yelling with all their might to Rhona Boswell, whose laugh, musical as ever, showed that she enjoyed the game as much as the children did. Sinfi was standing on a patch of that peculiar kind of black ash which burnt grass makes, busy with a fire, over which a tea-kettle was hanging from the usual iron kettle-prop. Among the ashes left by a previous fire her bantam-cock Pharaoh was busy pecking, scratching, and calling up imaginary hens to feast upon his imaginary "finds." I entered the Dell, and before Sinfi saw me I was close to her.

She was muttering to the refractory fire as though it were a live thing, and asking it why it refused to burn beneath the kettle. A startled look, partly of pleasure and partly of something like alarm, came over her face as she perceived me. I drew her aside and told her all that had happened in regard to Winifred's appearance as a beggar in London. A strange expression that was new to me overspread her features, and I thought I heard her whisper to herself, "I will, I will."

"I knowed the cuss 'ud ha' to ha' its way in the blood, like the bite of a sap" [snake], she murmured to herself. "And yit the dukkeripen on Snowdon said, clear and plain enough, as they'd surely marry at last. What's become o' the stolen trúshel, brother—the cross?" she inquired aloud. "That trúshel will ha' to be given to the dead man agin, an' it'll ha' to be given back by his chavo [child] as swore to keep watch over it. But what's it all to me?" she said in a tone of suppressed anger that startled me. "I ain't a Gorgie."

"But, Sinfi, the cross cannot be buried again. The reason I have not replaced it in the tomb,—the reason I never will replace it there,—is that the people along the coast know now of the existence of the jewel, and know also of my father's wishes. If it was unsafe in the tomb when only Winnie's father knew of it, it would be a thousandfold more unsafe now."

"P'raps that's all the better for her an' you: the new thief takes the cuss."

"This is all folly," I replied, with the anger of one struggling against an unwelcome half-belief that refuses to be dismissed. "It is all moonshine-madness. I'll never do it, —not at least while I retain my reason. It was no doubt

partly for safety as well as for the other reason that my father wished the cross to be placed in the tomb. It will be far safer now in a cabinet than anywhere else."

"Reia," said Sinfi, "you told me wonst as your great-grandmother was a Romany named Fenella Stanley. I have axed the Scollard about her, and what do you think he says? He says that she were my great-grandmother too."

"Good heavens, Sinfi! Well, I'm proud of my kinswoman."

"And he says that Fenella Stanley know'd more about the true dukkerin, the dukkerin of the Romanies, than anybody as were ever heerd on."

"She seems to have been pretty superstitious," I said, "by all accounts. But what has that to do with the cross?"

"You'll put it in the tomb again."

"Never!"

"Fenella Stanley will see arter that."

"Fenella Stanley! Why, she's dead and dust."

"That's what I mean; that's why she can make you do it, and will."

"Well, well! I did not come to talk about the cross; I want to have a quiet word with you about another matter."

She sprang away as if in terror or else in anger. Then recovering herself she took the kettle from the prop. I followed her to the tent, which, save that it was made of brown blanket, looked more like a tent on a lawn than a Gypsy-tent. All its comfort seemed, however, to give no great delight to Videy, the cashier and female financier-general of the Lovell family, who, in a state of absorbed untidiness, sitting at the end of the tent upon a palliasse covered with a counterpane of quilted cloth of every hue, was evidently occupied in calculating her father's profits and losses at the recent horse-fair. The moment Videy saw us she hurriedly threw the coin into the silver tea-pot by her side, and put it beneath the counterpane, with that instinctive and unnecessary secrecy which characterised her, and made her such an amazing contrast both to her sister Sinfi and to Rhona Boswell.

After Panuel had received me in his usual friendly manner, we all sat down, partly inside the tent and partly outside, around the white table-cloth that had been spread upon

the grass. The Scollard took no note of me, he had no eyes for any one but Rhona Boswell.

When tea was over Sinfi left the camp, and strode across the Dell towards the river. I followed her.

## II.

It was not till we reached a turn in the river that is more secluded than any other—a spot called "Gypsy Ring," a lovely little spot within the hollow of birch trees and gorse—that she spoke a few words to me, in a constrained tone. Then I said, as we sat down upon a green hillock within the Ring, "Sinfi, the baskets my aunt saw in Winnie's hand when she was standing in the rain were of the very kind that Videy makes."

"Oh, *that's* what you wanted to say!" said she; "you think Videy knows something about Winnie. But that's all a fancy o' yourn, and it's of no use looking for Winnie any more among the Romanies. Even supposin' you did hear the Welsh gillie—and I think it was all a fancy—you can't make nothin' out o' them baskets as your aunt seed. Us Romanies don't make one in a hundud of the fancy baskets as is sold for Gypsy baskets in the streets, and, besides, the hawkers and costers what buys 'em of us sells 'em agin to other hawkers and costers, and there ain't no tracin' on 'em."

I argued the point with her. At last I felt convinced that I was again on the wrong track. By this time the sun had set, and the stars were out. I had noticed that during our talk Sinfi's attention would sometimes seem to be distracted from the matter in hand, and I had observed her give a little start now and then, as though listening to something in the distance.

"What are you listening to?" I inquired at last.

"Reia," said Sinfi, "I've been a-listenin' to a v'ice as nobody can't hear on'y me, an' I've bin a-seein' a face peepin' atween the leaves o' the trees as nobody can't see on'y me; my mammy's been to me. I thought she would come here. They say my mammy's mammy wur buried here, an' she wur the child of Fenella Stanley, an' that's why it's called Gypsy Ring. The moment I sat down in this Ring a mullo

[spirit] come and whispered in my ear, but I can't make out whether it's my mammy or Fenella Stanley, and I can't make out what she said. It's hard sometimes for them as has to gnaw their way out o' the groun' to get their words out clear.* Howsomever, this I do know, reia, you an' me must part. I felt as we must part when we was in Wales togither last time, and now I knows it."

"Part, Sinfi! Not if I can prevent it."

"Reia," replied Sinfi, emphatically, "when I've wonst made up my mind, you know it's made up for good an' all. When us two leaves this 'ere Ring to-night, you'll turn your ways and I shall turn mine."

I thought it best to let the subject drop. Perhaps by the time we had left the Ring this mood would have passed. After a minute or so she said:

"You needn't see no fear about not marryin' Winifred Wynne. You *must* marry her; your dukkeripen on Snowdon didn't show itself there for nothink. When you two was a-settin' by the pool, a-eatin' the breakfiss, I was a-lookin' at you round the corner of the rock. I seed a little kindlin' cloud break away and go floatin' over your heads, and then it shaped itself into what us Romanies calls the Golden Hand. You know what the Golden Hand means when it comes over two sweethearts? You don't believe it? Ask Rhona Boswell! Here she comes a-singin' to herself. She's trying to get away from that devil of a Scollard as says she's bound to marry him. I've a good mind to go and give him a left-hand body-blow in the ribs and settle him for good and all. He means mischief to the Tarno Rye, and Rhona too. Brother, I've noticed for a long while that the Romany blood is a good deal stronger in you than the Gorgio blood. And now mark my words, that cuss o' your feyther's 'll work itself out. You'll go to his grave and you'll jist put that trúshul back in that tomb, and arter that and not afore, you'll marry Winnie Wynne."

Sinfi's creed did not surprise me: the mixture of guile and simplicity in the Romany race is only understood by the few who know it thoroughly: the race whose profession it is to cheat by fortune-telling, to read the false "dukkeripen" as being "good enough for the Gorgios," believe profoundly in Nature's symbols; but her bearing did surprise me.

* Some Romanies think that spirits rise from the ground.

"Your dukkeripen will come true," said she; "but mine won't, for I won't let it."

"And what is yours?" I asked.

"That's nuther here nor there."

Then she stood again as though listening to something, and again I thought, as her lips moved, that I heard her whisper, "I will, I will."

## III.

I HAD intended to go to London at once after leaving Gypsy Dell, but something that Sinfi told me during our interview impelled me to go on to Raxton Hall, which was so near. The fact that Sinfi was my kinswoman opened up new and exciting vistas of thought.

I understood now what was that haunting sense of recognition which came upon me when I first saw Sinfi at the wayside inn in Wales. Day by day had proofs been pouring in upon me that the strain of Romany blood in my veins was asserting itself with more and more force. Day by day I had come to realise how closely, though the main current of my blood was English, I was affined to the strange and mysterious people among whom I was now thrown—the only people in these islands, as it seemed to me, who would be able to understand a love-passion like mine. And there were many things in the great race of my forefathers which I had found not only unsympathetic to me, but deeply repugnant. In Great Britain it is the Gypsies alone who understand nature's supreme charm, and enjoy her largesse as it used to be enjoyed in those remote times described in Percy Aylwin's poems before the Children of the Roof invaded the Children of the Open Air, before the earth was parcelled out into domains and ownerships as it now is parcelled out. In the mind of the Gorgio, the most beautiful landscape or the most breezy heath or the loveliest meadow-land is cut up into allotments, whether of fifty thousand acres or of two roods, and owned by people. Of ownership of land the Romany is entirely unconscious. The landscape around him is part of nature herself, and the Romany on his part acknowledges no owner. No doubt he yields to *force majeure* in the shape of gamekeeper or con-

stable, but that is because he has no power to resist it. Nature to him is as free and unowned by man as it was to the North American Indian in his wigwam before the invasion of the Children of the Roof.

During the time that I was staying in Flintshire and near Capel Curig, rambling through the dells or fishing in the brooks, it was surprising how soon the companionship of a Gorgio would begin to pall upon me. And here the Cymric race is just as bad as the Saxon. The same detestable habit of looking upon nature as a paying market garden, the same detestable inquiry as to who was the owner of this or that glen or waterfall, was sure at last to make me sever from him. But as to Sinfi, her attitude towards nature, though it was only one of the charms that endeared her to me, was not the least of them. There was scarcely a point upon which she and I did not touch.

And what about her lack of education? Was that a drawback? Not in the least. The fact that she knew nothing of that traditional ignorance which for ages has taken the name of knowledge—that record of the foolish cosmogonies upon which have been built the philosophies and the social systems of the blundering creature Man—the fact that she knew nothing of these gave an especial piquancy to everything she said. I had been trying to educate myself in the new and wonderful cosmogony of growth which was first enunciated in the sixties, and was going to be, as I firmly believed, the basis of a new philosophy, a new system of ethics, a new poetry, a new everything. But in knowledge of nature as a sublime consciousness, in knowledge of the human heart, Sinfi was far more learned than I. And believing as I did that education will in the twentieth century consist of unlearning, of unlading the mind of the trash previously called knowledge, I could not help feeling that Sinfi was far more advanced, far more in harmony than I could hope to be with the new morning of Life of which we are just beginning to see the streaks of dawn.

"I must go and see Fenella's portrait," I said, as I walked briskly towards Raxton.

When I reached Raxton Hall I seemed to startle the butler and the servants, as though I had come from the other world.

I told the butler that I should sleep there that night, and then went at once to the picture gallery and stood before

Reynold's famous picture of Fenella Stanley as the Sibyl. The likeness to Sinfi was striking. How was it that it had not previously struck me more forcibly? The painter had evidently seized the moment when Fenella's eyes expressed that look of the seeress which Sinfi's eyes, on occasion, so powerfully expressed. I stood motionless before it while the rich, warm light of evening bathed it in a rosy radiance. And when the twilight shadows fell upon it, and when the moon again lit it up, I stood there still. The face seemed to pass into my very being, and Sinfi's voice kept singing in my ears, "Fenella Stanley's dead and dust, and that's why she can make you put that cross in your feyther's tomb, and she will, she will."

I left the picture and went into the library: for I bethought me of that sheaf of Fenella's letters to my great-grandfather which he had kept so sacredly, and which had come to me as representative of the family. My previous slight inspection of them had shown me what a wonderful woman she was, how full of ideas the most original and the most wild. The moment a Gypsy-woman has been taught to write there comes upon her a passion for letter-writing.

Nothing could be more striking than the contrast between the illiterate locutions and the eccentric orthography of Fenella's letters and the subtle remarks and speculations upon the symbols of nature,—the dukkeripen of the woods, the streams, the stars, and the winds. But when I came to analyse the theories of man's place in nature expressed in the ignorant language of this Romany heathen, they seemed to me only another mode of expressing the mysticism of the religious enthusiast Wilderspin, the more learned and philosophic mysticism of my father, and the views of D'Arcy, the dreamy painter.

As I rode back to London, I said to myself, "What change has come over me? What power has been gradually sapping my manhood? Why do I, who was so self-reliant, long now so passionately for a friend to whom to unburthen my soul—one who could give me a sympathy as deep and true as that I got from Sinfi Lovell, and yet the sympathy of a mind unclouded by ignorant superstitions?"

With the exception of D'Arcy, whose advice as to the disposal of the cross had proclaimed him to be as superstitious as Sinfi herself, not a single friend had I in all London. Indeed, besides Lord Sleaford (a tall, burly man

with the springy movement of a prize-fighter, with blue-grey eyes, thick, close-cropped hair, and a flaxen moustache, who had lately struck up a friendship with my mother) I had not even an acquaintance. Cyril Aylwin, whom I had not seen since we parted in Wales, was now on the Continent with Wilderspin. Strange as it may seem, I looked forward with eagerness to the return of this light-hearted jester. Cyril's sagacity and knowledge of the world had impressed me in Wales; but his cynical attitude, whether genuine or assumed, towards subjects connected with deep passion, had prevented my confiding in him. He must, I knew, have gathered from Sinfi, and from other sources, that I was mourning the loss of a Welsh girl in humble life; but during our very brief intercourse in Wales neither of us had mentioned the matter to the other. Now, however, in my present dire strait I longed to call in the aid of his penetrative mind.

# VIII.

# Isis as Humourist

# VIII.—ISIS AS HUMOURIST

## I.

On reaching London I resumed my wanderings through the London streets. Bitter as these wanderings were, my real misery now did not begin until I got to bed. Then began the terrible struggle of the soul that wrestles with its ancestral fleshly prison—that prison whose warders are the superstitions of bygone ages. "Have you not seen the curse literally fulfilled?" ancestral voices of the blood—voices Romany and Gorgio—seemed whispering in my ears. "Have you not heard the voice of his daughter upon whose head the curse of your dead father has fallen a beggar in the street, while not all your love can succour her or reach her?"

And then my soul would cry out in its agony, "Most true, Fenella Stanley—most true, Philip Aylwin; but before I will succumb to such a theory of the universe as yours, a theory which reason laughs at and which laughs at reason, I will die—die by this hand of mine; this flesh that imprisons me in a world of mocking delusion shall be destroyed, but first the symbol itself of your wicked, cruel old folly shall go."

I would then leap from my bed, light a candle, unlock my cabinet, take out the cross, and holding it aloft prepare to dash it against the wall, when my hand would be arrested by the same ancestral voices, Romany and Gorgio, whispering in my ears and at my heart:

"If you break that amulet, how shall you ever be able to see what would be the effect upon Winnie's fate of its restoration to your father's tomb?"

And then I would laugh aloud and mock the voices of Fenella Stanley and Philip Aylwin and millions of other voices that echoed or murmured or bellowed through half a

million years, echoed or murmured or bellowed from European halls and castles, from Gypsy tents, from caves of palæolithic man.

"How shall you stay the curse from working in the blood of the accursed one?" the voices would say. And then I would laugh again till I feared the people in the hotel would hear me and take me for a maniac.

But then my aunt's picture of a beggar-girl standing in the rain would fill my eyes and the whispers would grow louder than the voice of the North Sea in the March wind: "Look at *that*. How dare you leave undone anything, howsoever wild, which might seem to any one—even to an illiterate Gypsy, even to a crazy mystic—a means of finding Winifred? What is the meaning of the great instinct which has always conquered the soul in its direst need—which has always driven man when in the grip of unbearable calamity to believe in powers that are unseen? What though that scientific reason of yours tells you that Winifred's misfortunes have nothing to do with any curse? what though your reason tells you that all these calamities may be read as being the perfectly natural results of perfectly natural causes? Is the voice of man's puny reason clothed with such authority that it dares to answer his heart, which knows nothing but that it bleeds? The terrible facts of the case *may* be read in two ways. With an inscrutable symmetry these facts may and do fit in with the universal theory of the power of the spirit-world to execute a curse from the grave. Look at that beggar in the street! How dare you ignore the theory of the sorrowing soul, the logic of the lacerated heart, even though your reason laughs it to scorn?"

And then at last my laughter would turn to moans, and, replacing the cross in the cabinet, I would creep back to my bed ashamed, like a guilty thing—ashamed before myself.

But the more I felt at my throat the claws of the ancestral ogre Superstition, the more enraged I became with myself for feeling them there. And the anger against my ancestors' mysticism grew with the growing consciousness that I was rapidly yielding to the very same mysticism myself. And then I would get up again and take from my escritoire the sheaf of Fenella Stanley's letters which I had brought from Raxton, and read again those stories about curses, such

as that about the withering of a Romany family under a dead man's curse which Winnie had described to me that night on the sands.

## II.

I WAS delighted to be told by Sleaford, whom I met one afternoon in Piccadilly, that Cyril had returned to London within the last few days. "He is appointed artist-in-chief of the new comic paper, *The Caricaturist*," said Sleaford, "and is in great feather. I have just been calling upon him."

"The very man I want to see," I replied.

Sleaford thereupon directed me to Cyril's studio. "You'll find him at work," said he, "doin' a caricature of Wilderspin's great picture, 'Faith and Love.' Mother Gudgeon is sittin' as his model. He does everything from models, you know."

"Mother Gudgeon?"

"A female costermonger that he picked up somewhere in the slums, the funniest woman in London; haw! haw! I promise you she'll make you laugh when Cyril draws her out."

He then began to talk upon the subject which interested him above all others, the smartness and swiftness of his yacht. "I am trying to persuade your mother and aunt to go for a cruise with me, and I think I shall succeed."

He directed me to the studio and we parted.

I found Cyril in a large and lofty studio in Chelsea, filled with the curiously carved black furniture of Bombay, mixed, for contrast, with a few Indian cabinets of carved and fretted ivory exquisitely wrought. He greeted me cordially. The walls were covered with Japanese drawings. I began by asking him about *The Caricaturist*.

"Well," said he, "now that the House of Commons has become a bear-garden, and t'other House a wax-work show, and the intellect and culture of the country are leaving politics to dummies and cads, how can the artistic mind condescend to caricature the political world—a world that has not only ceased to be intelligent, but has even ceased to be funny? The quarry of *The Caricaturist* will be literature, science, and art. Instead of wasting artistic genius upon

such small fry as premiers, diplomatists, and cabinet ministers, our cartoons will be caricatures of the pictures of Millais, Leighton, Burne-Jones, Rossetti, Madox Brown, Holman Hunt, Watts, Sandys, Whistler, Wilderspin: our letterpress will be Aristophanic parodies of Tennyson, Browning, Meredith, Arnold, Morris, Swinburne; game worth flying at, my boy! The art-world is in a dire funk, I can tell you, for the artistic epidermis has latterly grown genteel and thin."

Already I was beginning to ask myself whether it was possible to make a confidant of this inscrutable cynic. "You are fond of Oriental things?" I said, wishing to turn the subject. I looked round at the Chinese, Indian, and Japanese monstrosities scattered about the room.

"That," said he, pointing to a picture of a woman (apparently drunk) who was amusing herself by chasing butterflies, while a number of broad-faced, mischievous-looking children were teasing her—"that is the masterpiece of Hokusai. The legend in the corner is 'Kiyó-ja chó ni tawamureru,' which, according to the lying Japanese scholars, means nothing more than 'A cracked woman chasing butterflies.' It was left for me to discover that it represents Yoka, the goddess of Fun, sportively chasing the butterfly souls of men, while the urchins, the little Yokas, are crying, 'Ma! you're screwed.'"

"But what are these quaint figures?" I asked, pointing to certain drawings of an obese Japanese figure, grinning with lazy good-humour above several of the cabinets.

"Hoteï, the fat god of enjoyment."

"A Japanese god?" I asked.

"Yes, nothing artistic is quite right now unless it has a savour of blue mould or Japan. Wonderful people, the Japanese, to have discovered the Jolly Hoteï. And here is Hoteï's wife, the goddess-queen Yoka herself—the real masquerader behind that mystic veil which has so enveloped and bemuddled the mind of poor Wilderspin. She is to figure in the first number of *The Caricaturist*."

He pointed to an object I had only partially observed: a broad-faced burly woman of about forty-five years of age, in an eccentric dress of Japanese silks, standing on the model-throne between two lay figures. "Good heavens!" I exclaimed, "why, she's alive."

"An' kickin', sir," said a voice that was at once strident

and unctuous. Owing to the almond shape of her sparkling black eyes and the flatness of her nose, the bridge of which had been broken (most likely in childhood), she looked absurdly like a Japanese woman, save that upon her quaintly-cut mouth, curving slightly upwards horse-shoe fashion, there was that twitter of humorous alertness which is perhaps rarely seen in perfection except among the lower orders, Celtic or Saxon, of London. Her build was that of a Dutch fisherwoman. The set of her head on her muscular neck showed her to be a woman of immense strength. But still more was her great physical power indicated by her hands, the fingers of which seemed to have a grip like that of an eagle's claws.

I then perceived upon an easel a large drawing. "I have not seen Wilderspin's 'Faith and Love,'" I said; "but this, I see, must be a caricature of it."

In it the woman figured as Isis, grinning beneath a veil held over her head by two fantastically-dressed figures—one having the face of Darwin, the other the face of Wilderspin.

"Allow me," said Cyril, "to introduce you to the Goddess Yoka, the true Isis or goddess of bohemianism and universal joke, who, when she had the chance of making a rational and common-sense universe, preferred amusing herself with flamingoes, dromedaries, ring-tailed monkeys, and men."

"Pardon me," I said; "I merely called to see you. Good afternoon."

"Allow me," said he, turning to the woman, "to introduce to your celestial majesty Mr. Henry Aylwin, a kinsman of mine, whose possessions in Little Egypt are as brilliant (judging from the colours of his royal waggon) as are his possessions in Philistia."

The woman made me a curtsey of much gravity.

"And allow me to introduce *you*," he said, turning to me, "to the real original Natura Mystica,—she who for ages upon ages has been trying by her funny goings-on to teach us that 'the *Principium hylarchicum* of the cosmos' (to use the simple phraseology of a great spiritualistic painter) is the benign principle of joke."

The woman made me another curtsey.

"You forget your exalted position, Mrs. Gudgeon," said Cyril; "when a mystic goddess-queen is so condescending as to curtsey she should be careful not to bend too low.

Man is a creature who can never with safety be treated with too much respect."

"We's all so modest in Primrose Court, that's the wust on us," replied the woman. "But, Muster Cyril, sir, I don't think you've noticed that the queen's *t'other* eye's got dry now."

Cyril gravely poured her out a glass of foaming ale from a bottle that stood upon a little Indian bamboo-table, and handed it to her carefully over the silks, saying to me:

"Her majesty's elegant way of hinting that she likes to wet both eyes!"

Such foolery as this and at such a time irritated me sorely; but there was no help for it now. Whether I should or should not open to him the subject that had taken me thither, I must, I saw, let him have his humour till the woman was dismissed.

"And now, goddess," said he, "while I am doing justice to the design of your nose——"

"You can't do that, sir," interjected the creature, "it's sich a beauty, ha! ha! I allus say that when I do die, I shall die a-larfin'. They calls me 'Jokin' Meg' in Primrose Court. I shall die a-larfin', they say in Primrose Court, and so I shall —unless I die a-cryin'," she added in an utterly different and tragic voice which greatly struck me.

"While I am trying to do justice to that beautiful bridge you must tell my friend about yourself and your daughter, and how you and she first became two shining lights in the art world of London."

"You makes me blush," said the woman, "an' blow me if blushin' ain't bin an' made *t'other* eye dry."

She then took another glass of ale, grinned, shook herself, as though preparing for an effort, and said:

"Well, you must know, sir, as my name's Meg Gudgeon, leaseways that was my name till my darter chrissened me Mrs. Knocker, and I lives in Primrose Court, Great Queen Street, and my reg'lar perfession is a-sellin' coffee 'so airly in the mornin',' and I've got a darter as ain't quite so 'ansom as me, bein' the moral of her father as is over the water a livin' in the fine 'Straley. And you must know, sir, that one 'ot summer's day there comes a knock at our door as sends my 'eart into my mouth and makes me cry out, 'The coppers, by jabbers!' and when I goes down and opens the door, lo! and behold, there stan's a chap wi' great goggle

eyes, dressed all in shiny black, jest like a Quaker." (Here she made a noise between a laugh and a cough.) "I allus say that when I do die I shall die a-larfin'—unless I die a-cryin'," she added, in the same altered voice that had struck me before.

"Well, mother," said Cyril, "and what did the shiny Quaker say?"

"They calls me 'Jokin' Meg' in Primrose Court. The shiny Quaker, 'e axes if my name is Gudgeon. 'Well,' sez I, 'supposin' as my name *is* Gudgeon,—I don't say it is,' says I, 'but supposin' as it is,—what then?' says I. 'But *is* that your name?' sez 'e. 'Supposin' as it was,' sez I, 'what then?' 'Will you answer my simple kervestion?' sez 'e. 'Is your name Mrs. Gudgeon, or ain't it not?' sez 'e. 'An' will *you* answer *my* simple kervestion, Mr. Shiny Quaker?' sez I. 'Supposin' my name was Mrs. Gudgeon,—I don't say it *is*, but supposin' it was,—what's that to you?' sez I, for I thought my poor boy Bob what lives in the country had got into trouble agin and had sent for me."

"Go on, mother," said Cyril, "what did the shiny Quaker say then?"

" 'Well then,' sez 'e, 'if your name is Mrs. Gudgeon, there is a pootty gal as is, I am told, a-livin' along o' you.' 'Oh, oh, my fine shiny Quaker gent,' sez I, an' I flings the door wide open an' there I stan's in the doorway, 'it's *her* you wants, is it?' sez I. 'And pray what does my fine shiny Quaker gent want wi' my darter?' 'Your darter?' sez 'e, and opens 'is mouth like this, and shets it agin like a rat-trap. 'Yis, my darter,' sez I. 'I s'pose,' sez I, 'you think she ain't 'ansom enough to be my darter. No more she ain't,' sez I; 'but she takes arter her father, an' werry sorry she is for it,' sez I. 'I want to put her in the way of 'arnin' some money,' sez 'e. 'Oh, *do* you?' sez I. 'How very kind! I'm sure it does a pore woman's 'eart good to see how kind you gents is to us pore women's pootty darters,' sez I,—'even shiny Quaker gents as is generally so quiet. You're not the fust shiny gent,' sez I, 'as 'ez followed 'er 'um, I can tell you,—not the fust by a long way; but up to now,' sez I, 'I've allus managed to send you all away with a flea in your ears, cuss you for a lot of wicious warments, young and old,' sez I, 'an' if you don't get out,' sez I—— 'My good woman, you mistake my attentions,' sez 'e. 'Oh, no, I don't,' sez I, 'not a bit on it. It's sich old sinners as you in your shiny black

coats,' sez I, 'as I never *do* mistake, and if you don't git out there's a pump-'andle behind this werry door, as my poor boy Bob brought up from the country for me to sell for him——' 'My good woman,' sez 'e, 'I am a hartist,' sez 'e. 'What's that?' sez I. 'A painter,' sez 'e. 'A painter, air you? you don't look it,' sez I. 'P'raps it's holiday time with ye,' sez I, 'and that makes you look so varnishy. Well, and what do painters more nor any other trade want with pore women's pootty darters?' sez I,—'more nor plumbers nor glaziers, nor bricklayers, for the matter of that?' sez I. 'But I ain't a 'ouse-painter,' sez 'e; 'I paints picturs, and I want this gal to set as a moral,' sez 'e. 'A moral; an' what's a moral?' sez I. 'You ain't a-goin' to play none o' your shiny-coat larks wi' my pootty darter,' sez I. 'I wants to paint her portrait,' sez 'e, 'an' then put it in a pictur'.' 'Oh,' sez I, 'you wants to paint her portrait 'cause she's such a pooty gal, an' then you wants to make believe you drawed it out of your own 'ead, an' sell it,' sez I. 'Oh, but you're a downy one, you are, an' no mistake,' sez I. 'But I like you none the wuss for that. I likes a downy chap, an' I don't see no objection to that; but how much will you give to paint my pooty darter?' sez I. 'P'raps I'd better come in,' sez he. 'P'raps you 'ad, if we're a-comin' to bisniss,' sez I; 'so jest make a long leg an' step over them dirty-nosed child'n o' Mrs. Mix's, a-settin' on my doorstep, an' I dessay we sha'n't quarrel over a 'undud p'un' or two,' sez I. An' then I bust out a-larfin' agin—I shall die a-larfin'." And then she added suddenly in the same tone of sadness, "if I don't die a-cryin'."

"Really, mother," said Cyril, "it is very egotistical of you to interrupt your story with prophesies about the mood in which you will probably shuffle off the Gudgeon coil and take to Gudgeon wings. It is the shiny Quaker we want to know about."

"And then the shiny Quaker comes in," said the woman, "and I shets the door, being be'ind 'im, and that skears 'im for a moment, till I bust out a-larfin': 'Oh, you needn't be afeard,' sez I;—'when we burgles a Quaker in Primrose Court we never minces *'im* for sossingers, 'e's so 'ily in 'is flavour.' Well, sir, to cut a long story short, I agrees to take my pootty darter to the Quaker gent's studero; an' I takes 'er nex' day, an' 'e puts her in a pictur. But afore long," continued the old woman, leering round at Cyril, "lo!

and behold, a young swell, p'raps a young lord in disguise (I don't want to be pussonal, an' so I sha'n't tell his name), 'e comes into that studero one day when I was a-settlin' up with the Quaker gent for the week's pay, an' he sets an' admires me, till I sets an' blushes as I'm a-blushin' at this werry moment; an' when I gits 'ome, I sez to Polly Onion (that's a pal o' mine as lives on the ground floor), I sez, 'Poll, bring my best lookin'-glass out o' my bowdore, an' let's have a look at my old chops, for I'm blowed if there ain't a young swell, p'raps a young lord in disguise, as 'ez fell 'ead over ears in love with me.' And sure enough when I goes back to the studero the werry nex' time, my young swell 'e sez to me, 'It's your own pootty face as I wants for *my* moral. I dessay your darter's a stunner—I ain't seen her yit—but she cain't be nothin' to you.' An' I sez to 'im, 'In course she ain't, for she takes arter her father's family, pore gal, and werry sorry she is for it.' "

At this moment a servant entered and said Mr. Wilderspin was waiting in the hall.

All hope having now fled of my getting a private word with Cyril that afternoon, I was preparing to slip away; but he would not let me go.

"I don't want Wilderspin to know about the caricature till it is finished," whispered he to me; "so I told Bunner never to let him come suddenly upon me. You'd better be off, mother," he said to the old woman, "and come again tomorrow."

She bustled up and, throwing off the Japanese finery, left the room, while Cyril removed the drawing from the easel and hid it away.

"Isn't she delightful?" ejaculated Cyril.

"Delightful? What, that old wretch? All that interests me in her is the change in her voice after she says she will die laughing."

"Oh," said Cyril, "she seems to be troubled with a drunken son in the country somewhere, who is always getting into scrapes. Wilderspin's in love with her daughter, a wonderfully beautiful girl, the finding of whom at the very moment when he was in despair for the want of the right model gave the final turn to his head. He thinks she was sent to him from Paradise by his mother's spirit! He does, I assure you."

"Wilderspin in love with a model!"

"Oh, not *à la* Raphael."

"If you think Wilderspin to be in love with any woman, you little know what love is," I exclaimed. "He is in love with his art and with that beautiful memory of his mother's self-sacrifice which has shattered his reason, but built up his genius. Except as a means toward the production of those pictures that possess him, no model is anything more to him than his palette-knife. Shall you be alone this evening?"

"This evening I dine at Sleaford's. To-morrow I am due in Paris."

Wilderspin, who had now entered the studio, seemed genuinely pleased to see me again, and told me that in a few days he should be able to borrow "Faith and Love" of its owner for the purpose of beginning a replica of it, and hoped then to have the pleasure of showing it to me.

"I observed Mrs. Gudgeon in the hall," said he to Cyril. "To think that so unlovely a woman should, through an illusion of the senses, seem to be the mere material mother of her who was sent to me from the spirit-world in the very depths of my despair! Wonderful are the ways of the spirit-world. Ah, Mr. Aylwin, did it never occur to you how important is the expression of the model from whom you work?"

"I am not a painter," I said; "only an amateur," trying to stop a conversation that might run on for an hour.

"It has never occurred to you! That is strange. Let me read to you a passage upon this subject just published in *The Art Review*, written by the great painter D'Arcy."

He then took from Cyril's table a number of *The Art Review*, and began to read aloud:—

"It is a curious thing that not only the general public, but the art connoisseurs and the writers upon art, although they know full well how a painter goes to work in painting a picture, speak and write as though they thought that the head of a beautiful woman was drawn from the painter's inner consciousness, instead of from the real woman who sits to him as a model. Notwithstanding all the technical excellence of Raphael, his extraordinary good luck in finding the model that suited his genius had very much to do with his enormous success and fame. And with all Michael Angelo's instinct for grandeur, if he had not been equally lucky in regard to models, he could never adequately have expressed that genius. It is impossible to give vitality to the painting of any head unless the artist has nature before him; this is why no true judge of pictures was ever deceived as to the difference between an original and a copy. It stands to reason that in every picture of a head, howsoever the model's feature may be idealised, Nature's own handiwork and mastery must dominate."

Here Cyril gently took the magazine from Wilderspin's hand, but did not silence him. "As I told you in Wales," said he to me, "I had an abundance of imagination, but I wanted some model in order to realise it. I could never meet a face that came anything nigh my own ideal of expression as the purely spiritual side of the beauty of woman; and until I did that I knew that I should achieve nothing whereby the world might recognise a new power in art. In vain did I try to idealise such faces as did not please me. And this was because nothing could satisfy me but the perfect type of expression which not even Leonardo nor any other painter in the world has found—the true Romantic type."

"I understand you, Mr. Wilderspin," I said. "This perfect type of expression you eventually found——"

"In the daughter," said Cyril, "of the goddess Gudgeon."

"By the blessing of Mary Wilderspin in heaven," said Wilderspin.

And then the talk between the two friends ran upon artistic matters, and I heard no more, for my mind was wandering up and down the London streets.

Wilderspin and I left the house together. As we walked along, side by side, I said to him: "You spoke just now of your mother's blessing. Am I really to understand that you in an age like this believe in the power of human blessings and human curses?"

"Do I believe in blessings and curses, Mr. Aylwin?" said Wilderspin, solemnly. "You are asking me whether I am with or without what your sublime father calls the 'most powerful of the primary instincts of man.' He tells us in *The Veiled Queen* that 'Even in this material age of ours there is not a single soul that does not in its inner depths acknowledge the power of the unseen world. The most hardened materialist,' says he, 'believes in what he calls sometimes "luck" and sometimes "fortune."' Let me advise you, Mr. Aylwin, to study the voice of your inspired father. I will send a set of his writings to your hotel tomorrow. And, Mr. Aylwin, my duty compels me to speak very plainly to you upon a subject that has troubled me since I had the honour of meeting you in Wales. There is but one commandment in the decalogue to which a distinct promise of reward is attached; it is that which bids us honour our fathers and our mothers. Good-day, sir."

# IX.

# The Palace of Nin-ki-Gal

# IX.—THE PALACE OF NIN-KI-GAL

## I.

SHORTLY after this I met my mother at our solicitor's office according to appointment. As she was on the eve of departing for the Continent, it was necessary that various family matters should be arranged. On the day following, as I was about to leave my hotel to call at Cyril's studio, rather doubtful, after the frivolity I had lately witnessed, as to whether or not I should unburden my heart to such a man, he entered my room in company with Wilderspin, the latter carrying a parcel of books.

"I have brought your father's works," Wilderspin said.

"Thank you very much," I replied, taking the books. "And when am I to call and see your picture? Have you yet got it back from the owner?"

"'Faith and Love' is now in my studio," he replied; "but I will ask you not to call upon me yet for a few days. I hope to be too busily engaged upon another picture to afford a moment to any one save the model—that is," he added with a sigh, "should she make her appearance."

"A picture of his called 'Ruth and Boaz,'" interposed Cyril. "Wilderspin is repainting the face from that favourite model of his of whom you heard so much in Wales. But the fact is the model is rather out of sorts at this moment, and Wilderspin is fearful that she may not turn up to-day. Hence the melancholy you see on his face. I try to console him, however, by assuring him that the daughter of a mamma with such a sharp appreciation of half-crowns as the lady you saw at my studio the other day is sure to turn up in due time as sound as a roach."

Wilderspin shook his head gravely.

"Good heavens!" I muttered, "when am I to hear the last of painters' models?" Then turning to Wilderspin I said:

"This is the model to whom you feel so deeply indebted?"

"Deeply indebted, indeed!" exclaimed he in a fervid tone, taking a chair and playing with his hat between his knees, in his previous fashion when beginning one of his monologues. "When I began 'Faith and Love' I worked for weeks and months and years, having but one thought, how to give artistic rendering to the great idea of the Renascence of Wonder in Art symbolised in the vignette in your father's third edition. I was very poor then; but to live upon bread and water and paint a great picture, and know that you are being watched by loving eyes above,—there is no joy like that. I found a model—a fine and a beautiful woman, the same magnificent blonde who sat for so many of the Master's great pictures. For a long time my work delighted me; but after awhile a suspicion, and then a sickening dread, came upon me that all was not well with the picture. And then the withering truth broke in upon me, the scales fell from my eyes—the model's face was beautiful, but it was not right; the expression I wanted was as far off as ever; there was but one right expression in the world, and that I could not find. Ah! is there any pain like that of discovering that all the toil of years has been in vain, that the best you can do—the best that the spiritual world permits you to do—is as far off the goal as when you began?"

"And so you failed after all, Mr. Wilderspin?" I said, anxious to get him away so that I might talk to Cyril alone upon the one subject at my heart.

"I told the model I should want her no more," said Wilderspin, "and for two days and nights I sat in the studio in a dream, and could get nothing to pass my lips but bread and water. Then it was that Mary Wilderspin, my mother, remembered me, blessed me—sent me a spiritual body——"

"For God's sake!" I whispered to Cyril, "take the good madman away; you don't know how his prattle harrows me just now."

"Ah! never," said Wilderspin, "shall I forget that sunny morning when was first revealed to me——"

"My dear fellow," said Cyril, "to tell the adventures of that sunny morning would, as I know from experience, keep us here for the next three hours. So, as I must not miss my

train, and as you cannot spare a second from 'Ruth and Boaz,' come along."

While I was accompanying them through the corridors of the hotel, Cyril said: "You say he is not in love with his model? Don't you see the sulky looks he gives me? I was the innocent cause of an unlucky catastrophe with her. I'll tell you about that, however, another time. Good-bye; I'm off to Paris."

"When you return to London," I said to Cyril, "I wish to consult you upon a matter that concerns me deeply."

## II.

On re-entering my room, as I stood and gazed at my father's book, *The Veiled Queen*, I understood something about that fascination which the bird feels who goes fluttering to the serpent's jaws from sheer repulsion. "Am I indeed," I asked myself, "that same Darwinian student who in Switzerland not long since turned over in scorn these pages, where are enshrined superstitious stories as gross as any of those told in Fenella Stanley's ignorant letters?"

In a chapter on "Love and Death" certain passages showed me how great must have been the influence of this book on Wilderspin, and I no longer wondered at what the painter had told me in Wales. I will give one passage here, because it had a strange effect on my imagination, as will be soon seen:

"There is an old Egyptian tablet of Nin-ki-gal, the Queen of Death, whose abode the tablet thus describes:—

> 'To the house men enter, but cannot depart from;
> To the road men go, but cannot return;
> The abode of darkness and famine,
> Where earth is their food—their nourishment clay.
> Light is not seen; in darkness they dwell:
> Ghosts, like birds, flutter their wings there;
> On the gate and the gate-posts the dust lies undisturbed.'

Another part of the inscription describes Nin-ki-gal on her throne scattering over the earth the 'Seeds of Life and Death,' and chanting her responses to the Sibyl, and to the prayers of the shapes kneeling around her, the dead gods and the souls of all the sons of men. And I often wonder whether my ancestress, Fenella Stanley,

had any traditional knowledge of the Queen of Death when she had her portrait painted as the Sibyl. But whether she had or not, I never think of this Egyptian Sibyl kneeling before Nin-ki-gal, surrounded by gods and men, without seeing in the Sibyl's face the grand features of Fenella Stanley.

THE SIBYL.

What answer, O Nin-ki-gal?
What answer, O Nin-ki-gal?
Have pity, O Queen of Queens!

NIN-KI-GAL.

Life's fountain flows,
And still the drink is Death's;
Life's garden blows,
And still 'tis Ashtoreth's;*
But all is Nin-ki-gal's.
I lent the drink of Day
To man and beast;
I lent the drink of Day
To gods for feast;
I poured the rivers of Night
On gods surceased:
Their blood was Nin-ki-gal's.

THE SIBYL.

What sowest thou, Nin-ki-gal?
What growest thou, Nin-ki-gal?
Have pity, O Queen of Queens!

NIN-KI-GAL.

Life-seeds I sow—
To reap the numbered breaths;
Fair flowers I grow—
And hers, red Ashtoreth's;
Yea, all are Nin-ki-gal's!

THE SIBYL.

What knowest thou, Nin-ki-gal?
What showest thou, Nin-ki-gal?
Have pity, O Queen of Queens!

NIN-KI-GAL.

Nor king nor slave I know,
Nor tribes, nor shibboleths;
But Life-in-Death I know—
Yea, Nin-ki-gal I know—
Life's Queen and Death's."

*Hathor.

* * * * * *

And what was the effect upon me of these communings with the ancestors whose superstitions I have, perhaps, been throughout this narrative treating in a spirit that hardly becomes their descendant?

The best and briefest way of answering this question is to confess not what I thought, as I went on studying my father's book, its strange theories and revelations, but what I did. I read the book all day long: I read it all the next day. I cannot say what days passed. One night I resumed my wanderings in the streets for an hour or two, and then returned home and went to bed,—but not to sleep. For me there was no more sleep until those ancestral voices could be quelled—till that sound of Winnie's song in the street could be stopped in my ears. For very relief from them I again leapt out of bed, lit a candle, unlocked the cabinet, and taking out the amulet, proceeded to examine the facets as I did once before when I heard in the Swiss cottage these words of my stricken father:—

"Should you ever come to love as I have loved, you will find that materialism is intolerable—is hell itself—to the heart that has known a passion like mine. You will find that it is madness, Hal, madness, to believe in the word 'never!' You will find that you *dare* not leave untried any creed, howsoever wild, that offers the heart a ray of hope."

And then while the candle burnt out dead in the socket I sat in a waking dream.

## III.

The bright light of morning was pouring through the window. I gave a start of horror, and cried, "Whose face?" Opposite to me there seemed to be sitting on a bed the figure of a man with a fiery cross upon his breast. That strange wild light upon the face, as if the pains at the heart were flickering up through the flesh—where had I seen it? For a moment when, in Switzerland, my father bared his bosom to me, that ancestral flame had flashed up into his dull lineaments. But upon the picture of "The Sibyl" in the portrait-gallery that illumination was perpetual!

"It is merely my own reflex in a looking-glass," I exclaimed.

Without knowing it I had slung the cross round my neck.

And then Sinfi Lovell's voice seemed murmuring in my ears, "Fenella Stanley's dead and dust, and that's why she can make you put that cross in your feyther's tomb, and she will, she will."

I turned the cross round: the front of it was now next to my skin. Sharp as needles were those diamond and ruby points as I sat and gazed in the glass. Slowly a sensation arose on my breast, of pain that was a pleasure wild and new. *I was feeling the facets.* But the tears trickling down, salt, through my moustache were tears of laughter; for Sinfi Lovell seemed again murmuring, "For good or for ill, you must dig deep to bury your daddy."

* * * * * *

What thoughts and what sensations were mine as I sat there, pressing the sharp stones into my breast, thinking of her to whom the sacred symbol had come, not as a blessing, but as a curse—what agonies were mine as I sat there sobbing the one word "Winnie,"—could be understood by myself alone, the latest blossom of the passionate blood that for generations had brought bliss and bale to the Aylwins.

* * * * * *

I cannot tell what I felt and thought, but only what I did. And while I did it my reason was all the time scoffing at my heart (for whose imperious behoof the wild, mad things I am about to record were done)—scoffing, as an Asiatic malefactor will sometimes scoff at the executioner whose pitiless and conquering saw is severing his bleeding body in twain. I arose and murmured ironically to Fenella Stanley as I wrapped the cross in a handkerchief and placed it in a hand-valise: "Secrecy is the first thing for us sacrilegists to consider, dear Sibyl, in placing a valuable jewel in a tomb in a deserted church. To take any one into our confidence would be impossible; we must go alone. But to open the tomb and close it again, and leave no trace of what has been done, will require all our skill. And as burglars' jemmies are not on open sale we must buy, on our way to the railway-station, screwdrivers, chisels, a hammer, and a lantern; for who should know better than you, dear Sibyl, that the palace of Nin-ki-gal is dark?"

## IV.

As I hurried towards the Great Eastern Railway station, I felt like a horse drawn by a Gypsy whisperer to do something against his own will, and yet in the street I stopped to buy the tools. Reaching Dullingham in the afternoon, I lunched there; and as I walked thence along the cliff, towards Raxton, I became more calm and collected. I determined not to go near the Hall, lest my movements should be watched by the servants. The old churchyard was full of workmen of the navvy kind, and I learned that for the safety of the public it had now become necessary to hurl down upon the sands some enormous masses of the cliff newly disintegrated by the land-springs. I descended the gangway at Flinty Point, and concealing my implements behind a boulder in the cliff, ascended Needle Point, and went into the town.

I had previously become aware, from conversations with my mother, that Wynne had been succeeded as custodian of the old church by Shales, the hump-backed tailor, and I apprehended no difficulty in getting the keys of the church and crypt from my simple-minded acquaintance, without arousing his suspicions as to my mission.

Therefore I went at once to the tailor's shop, but found that Shales was out, attending an annual Odd-Fellows' carousal at Graylingham. Consequently I was obliged to open my business to his mother, a far shrewder person, and one who might be much more difficult to deal with. However, the fact of the navvies being at work so close to a church whose chancel belonged to my family afforded an excellent motive for my visit. But before I could introduce the subject to Mrs. Shales, I had to listen to an exhaustive chronicle of Raxton and Graylingham doings since I had left. Hence by the time I quitted her (with a promise to return the keys in the morning) the sun was setting.

But, as I walked along Wilderness Road towards the church, a new and unexpected difficulty presented itself to my mind. I could not, without running the risk of an interruption, enter the church till after the Odd-Fellows had all returned from Graylingham, as Shales and his com-

panions would have to pass along Wilderness Road, which skirts the churchyard. Shales himself was as short-sighted as a bat; but his companions had the usual long-sight of agriculturists, and would descry the slightest movement in the churchyard, or any glimmer of light at the church windows.

I would have postponed my enterprise till the morrow; but another important appointment at the office of our solicitor with my mother precluded the possibility of this. So my visit to the catacomb must perforce be late at night.

Accordingly, I descended the cliff and waited to hear the return of the carousers. There I sat down upon the well-remembered boulder, lost in recollections of all that had passed on those sands, while over the sea the night spread like the widening, darkening wings of an enormous spectral bird, whose brooding voice was the drone of the waves as they came nearer and nearer. Then I began to think of what lay before me, of the strangeness and wildness of my life.

Then I recalled, with a shudder I could not repress, those sepulchral chambers beneath the church, which, owing, I believe, to the directions of an ancestor's will, had been the means of saving it from demolition after a large portion of the church had been condemned as dangerous. Raxton church is the only one along the coast that can boast a crypt; all the churches are Perpendicular in style, too late for crypts; a fact which is supposed to indicate that Raxton was, in very early times, a sea-side town of great importance; for the crypt is much older than the church, and of an entirely different kind of architecture. It was once a depository for the bones of Danish warriors killed before the Norman Conquest; it extends, not only beneath the chancel, as in most cases, but beneath both the transepts. The vaulting (supported partly on low columns of remarkable beauty and partly on the basement wall of the church) is therefore of unusual extent. The external door in the churchyard is now hidden by drifted sand and mould. Many years ago, to give place to the tombs and coffins of my family, the bones of the old Danes were piled together in various corners; and the thought of these bones called up the picture of the abode of "Nin-ki-gal," the Queen of Death:

> "Ghosts, like birds, flutter their wings there;
> On the gate and the gate-posts the dust lies undisturbed."

Then my mind began to make pictures for itself of my father lying in his coffin. I have, I think, already said that his body had been embalmed, in order to allow of its being conveyed from Switzerland to England. Therefore I had no dread of being confronted by that attribute of Death, alluded to by D'Arcy, which is the most cruel and terrible of all—corruption. But then what change should I find in the *expression* of those features which on the day of the interment had looked so calm? A thrill ran through my frame as I pictured myself raising the coffin-lid, and finding expressed upon the face, in language more appalling than any malediction in articulate speech—the curse!

At about ten o'clock I mounted the gangway and waited behind a deserted bungalow built for Fenella Stanley till I should hear the Odd-Fellows returning. In a few minutes I heard them approaching. They were singing snatches of songs they had been entertained with at Graylingham, and chatting and laughing as they went down Wilderness Road towards Raxton. As they passed the bungalow and adjoining mill there was a silence.

I heard one man say: "'Ez Tom Wynne's ghooast bin seen here o' late?"

"Nooa, but the Squoire's 'ez," said another.

"*I* say they've both on 'em bin seed," exclaimed a third voice, which I recognized to be that of old Lantoff of the "Fishing Smack"—"leastways, if they ain't bin seed they've bin 'eeared. One Saturday arternoon old Sal Gunn wur in the church a-cleanin' the Hall brasses, an' jist afore sundown, as she wur a-comin' away, she 'eeared a awful scrimmage an' squealin' in the crypt, and she 'eeared the v'ice o' the Squoire a-callin' out, and she 'eeared Tom Wynne's v'ice a-cussin' and a-swearin' at 'im. And more nor that, Sal told me that on the night when the Squoire wur buried, she seed Tom a-draggin' the Squoire's body along the churchyard to the cliff; only she never spoke on it at the time. And Sal says she larnt in a dream that the moment as Tom went and laid 'is 'and on that 'ere dimind cross in the coffin, up springs the Squoire and claps 'old o' Tom's throat, and Tom takes 'old on him, and drags him out o' the church, meanin' to chuck him over the cliffs, when God o' mighty, as wur a-keepin' 'is eye on Tom all the time, he jist lets go o' the cliffs and down they falls, and kills Tom, and buries him an' Squoire tew."

"Did you say Sal seed all that in a dream? or did she see it in old ale, Muster Lantoff?" said Shales.

"Well," replied Lantoff, as the party turned past the bungalow, "p'raps it wur ole ale as made me see in this very bungaler when I wur a bor the ghooast o' the great Gypsy lady whose pictur hangs up at the Hall, her as they used to call the old Squoire's Witch-wife."

Soon the singing and laughing were renewed; and I stood and listened to the sounds till they died away in the distance. Then I unlocked the church-door and entered.

## V.

As I walked down an aisle, the echoes of my footsteps seemed almost loud enough to be heard on the Wilderness Road. No one could have a more contemptuous disbelief in ghosts than I, and yet the man's words about the ghost of Fenella Stanley haunted me. When I reached the heavy nailed door leading down to the crypt, I lit the lantern. The rusty key turned so stiffly in the lock, that, to relieve my hands (which were burdened with the implements I had brought), I slung the hair-chain of the cross around my neck, intending merely to raise the coffin-lid sufficiently high to admit of my slipping the amulet in.

Having, with much difficulty, opened the door, I entered the crypt. The atmosphere, though not noisome, was heavy, and charged with an influence that worked an extraordinary effect upon my brain and nerves. It was as though my personality were becoming dissipated, until at last it was partly the reflex of ancestral experiences. Scarcely had this mood passed before a sensation came upon me of being fanned as if by clammy bat-like wings; and then the idea seized me that the crypt scintillated with the eyes of a malignant foe. It was as if the curse which, until I heard Winnie a beggar singing in the street, had been to me but a collocation of maledictory words, harmless save in their effect upon her superstitious mind, had here assumed an actual corporeal shape. In the uncertain light shed by the lantern, I seemed to see the face of this embodied curse with an ever-changing mockery of expres-

sion; at one moment wearing the features of my father; at another those of Tom Wynne; at another the leer of the old woman I had seen in Cyril's studio.

"It is an illusion," I said, as I closed my eyes to shut it out; "it is an illusion, born of opiate fumes or else of an overtaxed brain and an exhausted stomach." Yet it disturbed me as much as if my reason had accepted it as real. Against this foe I seemed to be fighting towards my father's coffin as a dreamer fights against a nightmare, and at last I fell over one of the heaps of old Danish bones in a corner of the crypt. The candle fell from my lantern, and I was in darkness. As I sat there I passed into a semi-conscious state. I saw sitting at the apex of a towering pyramid, built of phosphorescent human bones that reached far, far above the stars, the "Queen of Death, Nin-ki-gal," scattering seeds over the earth below. At the pryramid's base knelt the suppliant figure of a Sibyl pleading with the Queen of Death:

"What answer, O Nin-ki-gal?
Have pity, O Queen of Queens!"

And the Sibyl's face was that of Fenella Stanley—her voice was that of Sinfi Lovell.

And then from that dizzy height seemed to come a cackling laugh:—

"You makes me blush, an' blow me if blushin' ain't bin an' made *t'other* eye dry. I lives in Primrose Court, Great Queen Street, an' my reg'lar perfession is a-sellin' coffee 'so airly in the morning',' and I've got a darter as ain't quite so 'ansom as me, bein' the moral of her father."

And now in my vision I perceived that Nin-ki-gal's face was that of the old woman I had seen in Cyril's studio, and that she was dressed in the same fantastic costume in which Cyril had bedizened her.

## VI.

I SPRANG up, struck a light and relit the candle, and soon reached the coffin resting on a stone table. I found, on examining it, that although it had been screwed down after the discovery of the violation, the work had been so

loosely done that a few turns of the screwdriver were sufficient to set the lid free. Then I paused; for to raise the loosened lid (knowing as I did that it was only the blood's inherited follies that had conquered my rationalism and induced me to disturb the tomb) seemed to require the strength of a giant. Moreover, the fantastic terror of old Lantoff's story, which at another time would have made me smile, also took bodily shape, and the picture of a dreadful struggle at the edge of the cliff between Winnie's father and mine seemed to hang in the air—a fascinating mirage of ghastly horror.

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At last, by an immense effort of will, I closed my eyes and pushed the lid violently on one side.

* * * * * *

The "sweet odours and divers kinds of spices" of the Jewish embalmer rose like a gust of incense—rose and spread through the crypt like the sweet breath of a new-born blessing, till the air of the charnel-house seemed laden with a mingled odour of indescribable sweetness. Never had any odour so delighted my senses; never had any sensuous influence so soothed my soul.

While I stood inhaling the scents of opobalsam, and cinnamon and myrrh, and wine of palm and oil of cedar, and all the other spices of the Pharaohs, mingled in one strange aromatic cloud, my personality seemed again to become, in part, the reflex of ancestral experiences.

I opened my eyes. I looked into the coffin. The face (which had been left by the embalmer exposed) confronted mine. "Fenella Stanley!" I cried, for the great transfigurer Death had written upon my father's brow that self-same message which the passions of a thousand Romany ancestors had set upon the face of her whose portrait hung in the picture-gallery. And the rubies and diamonds and beryls of the cross as it now hung upon my breast, catching the light of the opened lantern in my left hand, shed over the features an indescribable reflex hue of quivering rose.

Beneath his head I placed the silver casket; I hung the hair-chain round his neck; I laid upon his breast the long-loved memento of his love and the parchment scroll.

Then I sank down by the coffin, and prayed. I knew not

what or why. But never since the first human prayer was breathed did there rise to heaven a supplication so incoherent and so wild as mine. Then I rose, and laying my hand upon my father's cold brow, I said: "You have forgiven me for all the wild words that I uttered in my long agony. They were but the voice of intolerable misery rebelling against itself. You, who suffered so much—who knew so well those flames burning at the heart's core—those flames before which all the forces of the man go down like prairie-grass before the fire and wind—you have forgiven me. You who knew the meaning of the wild word Love—you have forgiven your suffering son, stricken like yourself. You have forgiven me, father, and forgiven him, the despoiler of your tomb: you have removed the curse, and his child—his innocent child—is free."

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I replaced the coffin-lid, and screwing it down left the crypt, so buoyant and exhilarated that I stopped in the churchyard and asked myself: "Do I, then, really believe that she was under a curse? Do I really believe that my restoring the amulet has removed it? Have I really come to this?"

Throughout all these proceedings—yes, even amidst that prayer to Heaven, amidst that impassioned appeal to my dead father—had my reason been keeping up that scoffing at my heart which I have before described.

I knocked up the landlord of the "White Hart," and, turning into bed, slept my first peaceful sleep since my trouble.

To escape awkward questions, I did not in the morning take back the keys to Shales's house myself, but sent them, and walking to Dullingham took the train to London.

# X.

# Behind the Veil

# X.—BEHIND THE VEIL

## I.

When I met my mother at the solicitor's office next day, she was astonished at my cheerfulness and at the general change in me. As we left the office together, she said:

"Everything is now arranged: your aunt and I have decided to accept Lord Sleaford's invitation to go for a cruise in his yacht. We leave to-morrow evening. Lord Sleaford has promised to take me to-morrow afternoon to Mr. Wilderspin's studio, to see the great painter's portrait of me, which is now, I understand, quite finished."

"Why did you not ask me to accompany you, instead of asking Sleaford?"

"I did not know that you would care to do so."

"Dear mother," I said, in a tender tone that startled her, "you must let me go with you and Sleaford to the studio."

She consented, and on the following afternoon I called at my aunt's house in Belgrave Square. The hall was full of portmanteaux, boxes, and packages. Sleaford had already arrived, and was waiting with stolid patience for my mother, who had gone to her room to dress. He began to talk to me about the astonishing gifts of Cyril Aylwin.

"Have you made an appointment with Wilderspin?" I said to my mother, when she entered the room. "The last time I saw him he seemed to be much occupied with some disturbing affairs of his own."

"Appointment? No," said she, with an air that seemed to imply that an Aylwin, even with Gypsy blood in his veins, in calling upon Art, was conferring upon it a favour to be welcomed at any time.

"I have not seen this portrait yet," said Sleaford, as the carriage moved off; "but Cyril Aylwin says it is magnificent, and if anybody knows what's good and what's bad it's Cyril Aylwin."

"Do you know," said my mother to me, "I have taken vastly to this eccentric kinsman of ours? I had really no idea that a bohemian could be so much like a gentleman; but, of course, an Aylwin must always be an Aylwin."

"Haw, haw!" laughed Sleaford to himself, "that's good about Cyril Aylwin though—that's dooced good."

"We shall see Wilderspin's great picture, 'Faith and Love,' at the same time," I said, as we approached Chelsea; "for Wilderspin tells me that he has borrowed it from the owner to make a replica of it."

"That is very fortunate," said my mother. "I have the greatest desire to see this picture and its wonderful predella. Wilderspin is one of the few painters who revert to the predella of the old masters. He is said to combine the colour of him whom he calls 'his master' with the draughtsmanship and intellect of Shields, whose stained-glass windows the owner was showing me the other day at Eaton Hall; and do you know, Henry, that the painter of this wonderful 'Faith and Love' is never tired of declaring that the subject was inspired by your dear father?"

When we reached the studio the servant said that Mr. Wilderspin was much indisposed that afternoon, and was also just getting ready to go to Paris, where he was to join Mr. Cyril in his studio; "but perhaps he would see us," —an announcement that brought a severe look to my mother's face, and another half-suppressed "Haw, haw!" from Sleaford's deep chest.

Mounting the broad old staircase, we found ourselves in the studio of the famous spiritualist-painter—one of two studios; for Wilderspin had turned two rooms communicating with each other by folding-doors into a sort of double studio. One of these rooms, which was of moderate size, fronted the north-east, the other faced the south-west. There were (as I soon discovered) easels in both. It was the smaller of these rooms into which we were now shown by the servant. The walls were covered with sketches and drawings in various stages, and photographs of sculpture.

"By Jove, that's dooced like!" said Sleaford, pointing to my mother's portrait, which was standing on the floor, as though just returned from the frame-maker's: "ask Cyril Aylwin if it ain't when you see him."

It was a truly magnificent painting, but more full of imagination than of actual portraiture.

One of the windows was open, and the noise of an anvil from a blacksmith's shop in Maud Street came into the room.

"Do you know," said my mother in an undertone, "that this strange genius can only, when in London, work to the sound of a blacksmith's anvil? Nothing will induce him to paint a portrait out of his own studio; and I observed, when I was sitting to him here, that sometimes when the noise from the anvil ceased he laid down his brush and waited for the hideous din to be resumed."

Wilderspin now came through the folding doors, and greeted us in his usual simple, courteous way. But I saw that he was in trouble. "The portrait will look better yet," he said. "I always leave the final glazing till the picture is in the frame."

After we had thoroughly examined the portrait, we turned to look at a large canvas upon an easel. Wilderspin had evidently been working upon it very lately .

"That's 'Ruth and Boaz,' don't you know?" said Sleaford. "Finest crop of barley I ever saw in my life, judgin' from the size of the sheaves. Barley paid better than wheat last year. So the farmers all say."

"Don't look at it," said Wilderspin. "I have been taking out part of Ruth, and was just beginning to repaint her from the shoulders upwards. It will never be finished now," he continued with a sigh.

We asked him to allow us to see "Faith and Love."

"It is in the next room," said he, "but the predella is here on the next easel. I have removed it from underneath the picture to work upon."

"The head of Ruth has been taken out," said my mother, turning to me: "but isn't it like an old master? You ought to see the marvellous Pre-Raphaelite pictures at Mr. Graham's and Mr. Leyland's, Henry."

"Pre-Raphaelites!" said Wilderspin, "the Master rhymes, madam, and Burne-Jones actually *reads* the rhymes! However, they are on the right track in art, though neither has the slightest intercourse with the spirit world, not the slightest."

"My exploits as a painter have not been noticeable as yet," I said; "but an amateur may know what a barley field is. That is one before us. He may know what a man in love is; Boaz there is in love."

"I wish we could see the woman's face," said Sleaford. "A woman, you know, without a face——"

"Come and see the predella of 'Faith and Love,'" said Wilderspin, and he moved towards an easel where rested the predella, a long narrow picture without a frame. My mother followed him, leaving me standing before the picture of Ruth and Boaz. Although the head of Ruth had been painted out, the picture seemed to throb with life. Boaz had just discovered the Moabitish maiden in the gleaming barley-field, as she had risen from stooping to glean the corn. Two ears of barley were in one hand. In the face of Boaz was an expression of surprise, and his eyes were alight with admiration. The picture was finished with the exception of the face of Ruth, which was but newly sketched in. Wilderspin had contrived to make her attitude and even the very barley-ears in her hand (one of which was dangling between her slender fingers in the act of falling) express innocent perturbation and girlish modesty.

## II.

At length I joined the others, who were standing before the easel, looking at the predella which, as Wilderspin again took care to tell us, had been removed from the famous picture of 'Faith and Love' we were about to see in the next room—"the culmination and final expression of the Renascence of Wonder in Art."

"Perhaps it is fortunate," said he, "that I happen to be working at this very time upon the predella, which acts as a key to the meaning of the design. You will now have the advantage of seeing the predella before you see the picture itself. And really it would be to the advantage of the picture if every one could see it under like circumstances; it would add immensely to the effect of the design. Look well and carefully at the predella first. Try to imagine the Oriental Queen behind that veil, then observe the way in which the features are expressed through the veil; and then, but not till then, come into the adjoining room and see the picture itself, see what Isis really is (according to the sublime idea of Philip Aylwin) when Faith and Love, the twin angels of all true art, upraise the veil."

He then turned and passed through the folding-doors into a room of great size, crowded with easels, upon which pictures were resting.

The predella before me seemed a miracle of imaginative power. At that time I had not seen the work of the great poet-painter of modern times whom Wilderspin called "the Master," and by whom he had been unconsciously inspired.

"Most beautiful!" my mother ejaculated, as we three lingered before the predella. "Do look at the filmy texture of the veil."

"Looks more like steam than a white veil, don't you know?" said Sleaford.

"Like steam, my lord?" exclaimed Wilderspin from the next room. "The painter of that veil had peculiar privileges. As a child he had been in the habit of watching a face through the curtain of steam around a blacksmith's forge when hot iron is plunged into the water-trench, and the face, my lord, though begrimed by earthly toil, was an angel's. No wonder, then, that the painting in that veil is unique in art. The flesh-tints that are pearly and yet rosy seem, as you observe, to be breaking through it, and yet you cannot say what is the actual expression on the face. But now come and see the picture itself."

My mother and Sleaford lingered for a moment longer, and then passed between the folding-doors.

But I did not follow them; I *could* not. For now there was something in the predella before me which fascinated me, I scarcely knew why. It was the figure of the Queen—the figure between two sleeping angels, behind the veil, and expressed by the veil—that enthralled me.

There was a turn about the outlined neck and head that riveted my gaze; and, as I looked from these to the veil falling over the face, a vision seemed to be rapidly growing before my eyes—a vision that stopped my breath—a vision of a face struggling to express itself through that snowy film—*whose* face?

* * * * * *

"In the crypt my senses had a kind of license to play me tricks," I murmured; "but now and here my reason *shall* conquer."

I stood and gazed at the veil. During all the time I could hear every word of the talk between Wilderspin and

Sleaford and my mother before the picture in the other room.

"Awfully fine picture," said Sleaford, "but the Queen there—Isis: more like a European face than an Egyptian. I've been to Egypt a good deal, don't you know?"

"This is not an historical painting, my lord. As Philip Aylwin says, 'the only soul-satisfying function of art is to give what Zoroaster calls "apparent pictures of unapparent realities."' Perfect beauty has no nationality; hers has none. All the perfections of woman culminate in her. How can she then be disfigured by paltry characteristics of this or that race or nation? In looking at that group, my lord, nationality is forgotten, and should be forgotten. She is the type of Ideal Beauty whose veil can never be raised save by the two angels of all true art, Faith and Love. She is the type of Nature, too, whose secret, as Philip Aylwin says, 'no science but that of Faith and Love can read.'"

"Seems to be the type of a good deal; but it's all right, don't you know? Awfully fine picture! Awfully fine woman!" said Sleaford in a conciliatory tone. "She's a good deal fairer, though, than any Eastern women I've seen; but then I suppose she has worn a veil all her life up to now. Most of 'em take sly peeps, and let in the hot Oriental sun, and that tans 'em, don't you know?"

"And the original of this face?" I heard my mother say in a voice that seemed agitated; "could you tell me something about the original of this remarkable face?"

"The model?" said Wilderspin. "We are not often asked about our models, but a model like that would endow mediocrity itself with genius, for, though apparently, and by way of beneficent illusion, the daughter of an earthly costermonger, she was a wanderer from another and a better world. She is not more beautiful here than when I saw her first in the sunlight on that memorable day, at the corner of Essex Street, Strand, bare-headed, her shoulders shining like patches of polished ivory here and there through the rents in her tattered dress, while she stood gazing before her, murmuring a verse of Scripture, perfectly unconscious whether she was dressed in rags or velvet; her eyes——"

"The eyes—it *is* the eyes, don't you know—it is the eyes that are not quite right," said Sleaford. "Blue eyes with black eyelashes are awfully fine; you don't see 'em in Egypt.

But I suppose that's the type of something too. Types always floor me, don't you know?"

"But the scene is no longer Egypt, my lord; it is Corinth," replied Wilderspin.

During this dialogue I stood motionless before the predella; I could not stir; my feet seemed fixed in the floor by what can only be described as a wild passion of expectation. As I stood there a marvellous change appeared to be coming over the veiled figure of the predella. The veil seemed to be growing more and more filmy—more and more like the "steam" to which Sleaford had compared it, till at last it resolved itself into a veil of mist—into the rainbow-tinted vapours of a gorgeous mountain sunrise, and looking straight at me were two blue eyes sparkling with childish happiness and childish greeting, through flushed mists across a pool on Snowdon.

That she was found at last my heart knew, though my brain was dazed. That in the next room, within a few yards of me, my mother and Sleaford and Wilderspin were looking at the picture of Winifred's face unclouded by the veil, my heart knew as clearly as though my eyes were gazing at it, and yet I could not stir. Yes, I knew that she was now neither a beggar in the street, nor a prisoner in one of the dens of London, nor starving in a squalid garret, but was safe under the sheltering protection of a good man. I knew that I had only to pass between those folding-doors to see her in Wilderspin's picture—see her dressed in the "azure-coloured tunic bordered with stars," and the upper garment of the "colour of the moon at moonrise," which Wilderspin had so vividly described in Wales, and yet, paralysed by expectation, I could not stir.

## III.

Soon I was conscious that my mother, Sleaford, and Wilderspin were standing by my side, that Wilderspin's hand was laid on my arm, and that I was pointing at the predella —pointing and muttering:

"She lives! She is saved."

My mother led me into the other studio, and I stood

before the great picture. Wilderspin and Sleaford, feeling that something had occurred of a private and delicate nature, lingered out of hearing in the smaller studio.

"I must be taken to her at once," I muttered to my mother, "at once."

So living was the portrait of Winifred that I felt that she must be close at hand. I looked round to see if she herself were not standing by me dressed in the dazzling draperies gleaming from Wilderspin's superb canvas.

But in place of Winifred the profile of my mother's face, cold, proud, and white, met my gaze. Again did the stress of over-mastering emotion make of me a child, as it had done on the night of the landslip. "Mother!" I said, "you see who it is?"

She made no answer: she stood looking steadfastly at the picture; but the tremor of the nostrils, the long deep breaths she drew, told me of the fierce struggle waging within her breast between conscience and pity, with rage and cruel pride. My old awe of her returned. I was a little boy again, trembling for Winnie. In some unaccountable and, I believe, unprecedented way I had always felt that she, my own mother, belonged to some haughty race superior to mine and Winnie's; and nothing but the intensity of my love for Winnie could ever have caused me to rebel against my mother.

"Dear mother," I murmured, "all the mischief and sorrow and pain are ended now; and we shall all be happy; for you have a kind heart, dear, and cannot help loving poor Winnie, when you come to know her."

She made no answer save that her lips slowly reddened again after the pallor; then came a quiver in them, as though pity were conquering pride within her breast, and then that contemptuous curl that had often in the past cowed the heart of the fearless and pugnacious boy whom no peril of sea or land could appal.

"She is found," I said. "And, mother, there is no longer an estrangement between you and me. I forgive you everything now."

I leapt from her as though I had been stung, so sudden and unexpected was the look of scorn that came over her face as she said, "You forgive me!" It recalled my struggle with her on that dreadful night: and in a moment I became myself again. The pleading boy became, at a

flash, the stern and angry man that misery had made him. With my heart hedged once more with points of steel to all the world but Winnie, I turned away. I did not know then that her attitude towards me at this moment came from the final struggle in her breast between her pride and that remorse which afterwards took possession of her and seemed as though it would make the remainder of her life a tragedy without a smile in it. At that moment Wilderspin and Sleaford came in from the smaller studio. "Where is she?" I said to Wilderspin. "Take me to her at once—take me to her who sat for this picture. It is she whom I and Sinfi Lovell were seeking in Wales."

A look of utter astonishment, then one of painful perplexity came over his face—a look which I attributed to his having heard part of the conversation between my mother and myself.

"You mean the—the—model? She is not here, Mr. Aylwin," said he. "The same young lady you were seeking in Wales! Mysterious indeed are the ways of the spirit world!" and then his lips moved silently as though in prayer.

"Where is she?" I asked again.

"I will tell you all about her soon—when we are alone," he said in an undertone. "Does the picture satisfy you?"

The picture! He was thinking of his art. Amid all that gorgeous pageant in which mediæval angels were mixed with classic youths and flower-crowned maidens, in such a medley of fantastic beauty as could never have been imagined save by a painter who was one-third artist, one-third madman, and one-third seer—amid all the marvels of that strange, uncanny culmination of the neo-Romantic movement in Art which had excited the admiration of one set of the London critics and the scorn of others, I had really and fully seen but one face—the face of Isis, or Pelagia, or Eve, or *Natura Benigna*, or whosoever she was looking at me with those dear eyes of Winnie's which were my very life—looking at me with the same bewitching, indescribable expression that they wore when she sat with her "Prince of the Mist" on Snowdon. I tried to take in the *ensemble*. In vain! Nothing but the face and figure of Winifred—crowned with seaweed as in the Raxton photograph—could stay for the thousandth part of a second upon my eyes.

"Wilderspin," I said, "I cannot do the picture justice at this moment. I must see it again—after I have seen *her*. Where is she? Can I not see her now?"

"You cannot."

"Can I not see her to-day?"

"You cannot. I will tell you soon, and I have much to tell you," said Wilderspin, looking uneasily round at my mother, who did not seem inclined to leave us. "I will tell you all about her when—when you are sufficiently calm."

"Tell me now," I said.

"Gad! this is a strange affair, don't you know. It would puzzle Cyril Aylwin himself," said Sleaford. "What the dooce does it all mean?"

"Is she safe?" I cried to Wilderspin.

There was a pause.

Is she safe?" I cried again.

"Quite safe," said Wilderspin, in a tone whose solemnity would have scared me had the speaker been any other person that this eccentric creature. "When you are less agitated, I will tell you all about her."

"No! now, now!"

## IV.

"Well, Mr. Aylwin," said Wilderspin, "when I first saw your father's book, *The Veiled Queen*, it was the vignette on the title-page that attracted me. In the eyes of that beautiful child-face, even as rendered by a small reproduction, there was the very expression that my soul had been yearning after—the expression which no painter of woman's beauty had ever yet caught and rendered. I felt that he who could design or suggest to a designer such a vignette must be inspired, and I bought the book: it was as an artist, not as a thinker, that I bought the book for the vignette. When, on reading it, I came to understand the full meaning of the design, such sweet comfort and hope did the writer's words give me, that I knew at once who had impressed me to read it—I knew that my mission in life was to give artistic development to the sublime ideas of Philip Aylwin. I began the subject of 'Faith and Love.' But the more I tried to render the expression that had

fascinated me the more impossible did the task seem to me. Howsoever imaginative may be any design, the painter who would produce a living picture must paint from life, and then he has to fight against his model's expression. Do you remember my telling you the other day how the spirit of Mary Wilderspin in heaven came upon me in my sore perplexity and blessed me—sent me a spiritual body—led me out into the street, and——"

"Yes, yes, I remember; but what happened?"

"We will sit," said Wilderspin.

He placed chairs for us, and I perceived that my mother did not intend to go.

"Well," he continued, "on that sunny morning I was impressed to leave my studio and go out into the streets. It was then that I found what I had been seeking,—the expression in the beautiful child-face of the vignette."

"In the street!" I heard my mother say to herself.

"How did it come about?" she asked aloud.

"It had long been my habit to roam about the streets of London whenever I could afford the time to do so, in the hope of finding what I sought, the fascinating and indescribable expression of that one, lovely child-face. Sometimes I believed that I had found this expression. I have followed women for miles, traced them home, introduced myself to them, told them of my longings; and have then, after all, come away in bitter disappointment. The insults and revilings I have, on these occasions, sometimes submitted to I will narrate to no man, for they would bring me no respect in a cynical age like this—an age which Carlyle spits at and the great and good John Ruskin chides. Sometimes my dear friend Mr. Cyril has accompanied me on these occasions, and he has seen how I have been humiliated."

An involuntary "haw, haw!" came from Sleaford, but looking towards my mother and perceiving that she was listening with intense eagerness, he said: "Ten thousand pardons, but Cyril Aylwin's droll stories,—don't you know? they will—hang it all—keep comin' up and makin' a fellow laugh."

"Well," continued Wilderspin, "on that memorable morning I was impressed to walk down the street towards Temple Bar. I was passing close to the wall to escape the glare of the sun, when I was stopped suddenly by a sight

which I knew could only have been sent to me in that hour of perplexity by her who had said that Jesus would let her look down and watch her boy. Moreover, at that moment the noise of the Strand seemed to cease in my ears, which were filled with the music I love best—the only music that I have patience to listen to—the tinkle of a blacksmith's anvil."

"Blacksmith's anvil in the Strand?" said Sleaford.

"It was from heaven, my lord, that the music fell like rain; it was a sign from Mary Wilderspin who lives there."

"For God's sake be quick!" I exclaimed. "Where was it?"

"At the corner of Essex Street. A bright-eyed, bright-haired girl in rags was standing bareheaded, holding out boxes of matches for sale, and murmuring words of Scripture. This she was doing quite mechanically, as it seemed, and unobservant of the crowd passing by,—individuals of whom would stop for a moment to look at her; some with eyes of pure admiration and some with other eyes. The squalid attire in which she was clothed seemed to add to her beauty."

"My poor Winnie!" I murmured, entirely overcome.

"She seemed to take as little heed of the heat and glare as of the people, but stood there looking before her, murmuring texts from Scripture as though she were communing with the spiritual world. Her eyes shook and glittered in the sunshine; they seemed to emit lights from behind the black lashes surrounding them; the ruddy lips were quivering. There was an innocence about her brow, and yet a mystic wonder in her eyes which formed a mingling of the childlike with the maidenly such as——"

"Man! man! would you kill me with your description?" I cried. Then grasping Wilderspin's hand, I said, "But,—but was she begging, Wilderspin? Not literally begging! My Winnie! my poor Winnie!"

My mother looked at me. The gaze was full of a painful interest; but she recognized that between me and her there now was rolling an infinite sea of emotion, and her eyes drooped before mine as though she had suddenly invaded the privacy of a stranger.

"She was offering matches for sale," said Wilderspin.

"Winnie! Winnie! Winnie!" I murmured. "Did she seem emaciated, Wilderspin? Did she seem as though she wanted food?"

"Heaven, no!" exclaimed my mother.

"No," replied Wilderspin, firmly. "On that point who is a better judge than the painter of 'Faith and Love'? She did not want food. The colour of the skin was not—was not—such as I have seen—when a woman is dying for want of food."

"God bless you, Wilderspin, God bless you! But what then?—what followed?"

"Well, Mr. Aylwin, I stood for some time gazing at her, muttering thanks to my mother for what I had found. I then went up to her, and asked her for a box of matches. She held me out a box, mechanically, as it seemed, and, when I had taken it of her, she held out her hand just as though she had been a real earthly beggar-girl; but that was part of the beneficent illusion of Heaven."

"That was for the price, don't you know?" said Sleaford. "What did you give her?"

"I gave her a shilling, my lord, which she looked at for some time in a state of bewilderment. She then began to feel about her as if for something."

"She was feelin' for the change, don't you know?" said Sleaford, not in the least degree perceiving how these interruptions of a prosaic mind were maddening me.

"I told her that I wanted to speak to her," continued Wilderspin, "and asked her where she lived. She gave me the same bewildered, other-world look with which she had regarded the shilling, a look which seemed to say, 'Go away now: leave me alone!' As I did not go, she began to appear afraid of me, and moved away towards Temple Bar, and then crossed the street. I followed, as far behind as I could without running the danger of losing sight of her, to a wretched place running out of Great Queen Street, Holborn, which I afterwards found was called Primrose Court, and when I got there she had disappeared in one of the squalid houses opening into the Court. I knocked at the first door once or twice before an answer came, and then a tiny girl with the face of a woman opened it. 'Is there a beggar-girl living here?' I asked. 'No,' answered the child in a sharp, querulous voice. 'You mean Meg Gudgeon's gal wot sings and does the rainy-night dodge. She lives next house.' And the child slammed the door in my face. I knocked at the next door, and after waiting for a minute it was opened by a short, middle-aged woman,

with black eyes and a flattened nose, who stared at me, and then said, 'A Quaker, by the looks o' ye.' She had the strident voice of a raven, and she smelt, I thought, of gin."

"But, Mr. Wilderspin, Mr. Wilderspin, you said the girl was safe!"

It was my mother's voice, but so loud, sharp, and agonised was it that it did not seem to be her voice at all. In that dreadful moment, however, I had no time to heed it. At the description of the hideous den and the odious Mrs. Gudgeon, whose face as I had seen it in Cyril's studio had haunted me in the crypt, a dreadful shudder passed through my frame; an indescribable sense of nausea stirred within me; and for a moment I felt as though the pains of dissolution were on me. And there was something in Wilderspin's face—what was it?—that added to my alarm. "Stay for a moment," I said to him; "I cannot yet bear to hear any more."

"I know the dread that has come upon you, and upon your kind, sympathetic mother," said he; "but she you are disturbed about was not a prisoner in the kind of place my words seem to describe."

"But the woman?" said my mother. "How could she be safe in such hands?"

"Has he not said she is safe?" I cried, in a voice that startled even my own ears, so loud and angry it was, and yet I hardly knew why.

"You forget," said Wilderspin, turning to my mother, "that the whole spiritual world was watching over her."

"But was the place very—was it so very squalid?" said my mother. "Pray describe it to us, Mr. Wilderspin; I am really very anxious."

"No!" I said; "I want no description: I shall go and see for myself."

"But, Henry, I am most anxious to know about this poor girl, and I want Mr. Wilderspin to tell us how and where he found her."

"The 'poor girl' concerns me alone, mother. Our calamities—Winnie's and mine—are between us two and God. . . . You engaged her, Wilderspin, of the woman whom I saw at Cyril's studio, to sit as a model? What passed when she came?"

"The woman brought her next day," said Wilderspin, "and I sketched in the face of Pelagia as Isis at once. I had

already taken out the face of the previous model that had dissatisfied me. I now took out the figure too, for the figure of this new model was as perfect as her face."

"Go on, go on. What occurred?"

"Nothing, save that she stood dumb, like one who had no language save that of another world. But at the second sitting she had a fit of a most dreadful kind."

"Ah! Tell me quickly," I said.

"Her face became suddenly distorted by an expression of terror such as I had never seen and never imagined possible. I have caught it exactly in my picture 'Christabel.' She revived and tried to run out of the studio. Her mother and I seized her, and she then fell down insensible."

"What occasioned the fit? What had frightened her?"

"That is what I am not quite certain about. When she entered the studio she fixed her eyes upon a portrait which I had been working upon; but that must have been merely a coincidence."

"A portrait!" I cried. And Winifred's scared expression when she encountered my mother's look of hate in the churchyard came back to me like a scene witnessed in a flash of lightning. "The portrait was my mother's?"

"It was the face of the kind, tender, and noble lady, your mother," said Wilderspin, gently.

I gave a hurried glance at my mother, and saw the pallor of her face,—but to me the world held now only two realities, Winifred and Wilderspin; all other people were dreams, obtrusive and irritating dreams.

"Go on, go on," I said.

"She recovered," continued Wilderspin, "and seemed to have forgotten all about the portrait, which I had put away."

"Did she talk?"

"Never, Mr. Aylwin," said Wilderspin, solemnly. "Nor did I invite her to talk, knowing whence she came—from the spirit-world. At the first few sittings Mrs. Gudgeon came with her, and would sit looking on with the intention of seeing that she came to no harm. She said her daughter was very beautiful, and she, her mother, never trusted her with men."

"God bless the hag, God bless her; but go on!"

"Gradually Mrs. Gudgeon seemed to acquire more confidence in me; and one day, on leaving, she lingered behind

the girl, and told me that her daughter, though uncommonly stupid and a little touched in the head, had now learnt her way to my studio, and that in future she should let her come alone, as she believed that she could trust her with me. She warned me earnestly, however, not to 'worrit' the girl by asking her all sorts of questions."

"And there she was right," I cried. "But you did ask her questions,—I see you did, you asked her about her father, and brought on another catastrophe."

"No," said Wilderspin with gentle dignity; "I was careful not to ask her questions, for her mother told me that she was liable to fits."

"Mr. Wilderspin, I beg your pardon," I said.

"I see you are deeply troubled," said he; "but, Mr. Aylwin, you need not beg my pardon. Since I saw Mary Wilderspin, my mother, die for her children, no words of mere Man have been able to give me pain."

"Go on, go on. What did the woman say to you?"

"She said, 'The fewer questions you ask her the better, and don't pay her any money. She'd only lose it; I'll come for it at the proper times.' From that day the model came to the sittings alone, and Mrs. Gudgeon came at the end of every week for the money."

"And did the model maintain her silence all this time?"

"She did. She would, every few minutes, sink into a reverie, and appear to be stone-deaf. But sometimes her face would become suddenly alive with all sorts of shifting expressions. A few days ago she had another fit, exactly like the former one. That was on the day preceding my call at your hotel with your father's books. This time we had much more difficulty in bringing her round. We did so at last; and when she had gone I gave the final touch to my picture of the Lady Geraldine and Christabel. I was at the moment, however, at work upon 'Ruth and Boaz', which I had painted years before—removing the face of Ruth originally there. I worked long at it; and as she was not coming for two days I kept steadily at the picture. This was on the day on which I called upon you, wishing you to postpone your visit, lest you should interrupt me while at work upon the head of Ruth, which I was hoping to paint. On Thursday I waited for her at the appointed hour, but she did not come, and I saw her no more."

## V.

"Mr. Wilderspin," I said, as I rose hurriedly, with the intention of going at once in search of Winifred, "let me see the picture you allude to—'Christabel,' and then tell me where to find her."

"Better not see it!" said Wilderspin, solemnly; "there's something to tell you yet, Mr. Aylwin."

"Yes, yes; but let me see the picture first. I can bear anything now. Howsoever terrible it may be, I can bear it now; for she's found—she's safe." And I rushed into the next room, and began turning round in a wild manner one after another some dozens of canvases that were standing on the floor and leaning against the wall.

Half the canvases had been turned, and then I came upon what I sought.

I stood petrified. But I heard Wilderspin's voice at my side say, "Do not let an imaginary scene distress you, Mr. Aylwin. The picture merely represents the scene in Coleridge's poem where the Lady Christabel, having secretly and in pity brought to her room to share her bed the mysterious lady she had met in the forest at midnight, watches the beautiful witch undress, and is spell-bound and struck dumb by some 'sight to dream of, not to tell,' which she sees at the lady's bosom."

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Christabel! It was Winifred sitting there upright in bed, confronted by a female figure—a tall lady, who with bowed head was undressing herself beneath a lamp suspended from the ceiling. Christabel! It was Winifred gazing at this figure—gazing as though fascinated; her dark hair falling and tumbling down her neck, till it was at last partly lost between her shining bosom and her nightdress. Yes, and in her blue eyes there was the same concentration of light, there was the same uprolling of the lips, there was the same dreadful gleaming of the teeth, the same swollen veins about the throat I had seen in Wales. No wonder that at first I could see only the face and figure of Winifred. My consciousness had again dwindled to a single point. In a few seconds, however, I perceived that the scene was

an antique oak-panelled chamber, corniced with large and curiously-carved figures, upon which played the warm light from a silver lamp suspended from the middle of the ceiling by a twofold silver chain fastened to the feet of an angel, quaintly carved in the dark wood of the ceiling. It was beneath this lamp that stood the majestic figure of the beautiful stranger, the Lady Geraldine. As she bent her head to look at her bosom, which she was about fully to uncover, the lamp-light gleaming among the gems and flashing in her hair and down her loosened white silken robe to her naked feet, shining, blue-veined and half-hidden in the green rushes that covered the floor, she seemed to be herself the source from which the lurid light was shed about the room. But her eyes were brighter than all. They were more dreadful by far to look at than Winifred's own—they were rolling wildly as if in an agony of hate, while she was drawing in her breath till that marble throat of hers seemed choking. It was not upon her eyes, however, that Winifred's were fixed: it was upon the lady's bosom,—for out from beneath the partially-loosened robes that covered that bosom a tiny fork of flame was flickering like a serpent's tongue ruddy from the fires of a cruel and monstrous hate within.

This sight was dreadful enough; but it was not the terror on Winifred's face that now sent me reeling against Sleaford, who with my mother had followed me into the smaller room. Whose figure was that, and whose was the face which at first I had half-recognised in the Lady Geraldine? My mother's!

In painting this subject Wilderspin had, without knowing it, worked with too strong a reminiscence of my mother's portrait, unconscious that he was but giving expression to the awful irony of Heaven.

I turned round. Wilderspin was supporting with difficulty my mother's dead weight. For the first time (as I think) in her life, she whom, until I came to know Sinfi Lovell, I had believed to be the strongest, proudest, bravest woman living, had fainted.

"Dear me!" said Wilderspin, "I had no idea that Christabel's terror was so strongly rendered,—no idea! Art should never produce an effect like this. Romantic art knows nothing of a mere sensational illusion. Dear me!—I must soften it at once."

He was evidently quite unconscious that he had given my mother's features to Geraldine, and attributed the effect to his own superlative strength as a dramatic artist.

I ran to her: she soon recovered, but asked to be taken to Belgrave Square at once. Wild as I was with the desire to go in quest of Winifred; goaded as I was by a new, nameless, shapeless dread which certain words of Wilderspin's had aroused, but which (like the dread that had come to me on the night of my father's funeral) was too appalling to confront, I was obliged to leave the studio and take my mother to the house of my aunt, who was, I knew, waiting to start for the yacht.

# XI.

# The Irony of Heaven

# XI.—THE IRONY OF HEAVEN

## I.

As we stepped into the carriage, Sleaford, full of sympathy, jumped in. This fortunately prevented a conversation that would have been intolerable both to my mother and to me.

"Studio oppressively close," said Sleaford; "usual beastly smell of turpentine and pigments and things. Why the dooce don't these fellows ventilate their studios before they get ladies to go to see their paintin's!" This he kept repeating, but got no response from either of us.

As to me, let me honestly confess that I had but one thought: how much time would be required to go to Belgrave Square and back to the studio, to learn the whereabouts of Winifred. "But she's safe," I kept murmuring, in answer to that rising dread: "Wilderspin said she was safe."

During that drive to Belgrave Square, he whose bearing towards my mother was that of the anxious, loving son was not I, the only living child of her womb, but poor, simple, empty-headed Sleaford.

When we reached Belgrave Square my mother declared that she had entirely recovered from the fainting fit, but I scarcely dared to look into those haggard eyes of hers, which showed only too plainly that the triumph of remorse in her bosom was now complete. My aunt, who seemed to guess that something lowering to the family had taken place, was impatient to get on board the yacht. I saw how my mother now longed to remain and learn the upshot of events; but I told her that she was far better away now, and that I would write to her and keep her posted up in the story day by day. I bade them a hurried "Good-bye."

"How shall I be able to stay out of England until I know all about her?" said my mother. "Go back and learn all

about her, Henry, and write to me; and be sure to get and take care of that dreadful picture, and write to me about that also."

When the carriage left I walked rapidly along the Square, looking for a hansom. In a second or two Sleaford was by my side. He took my arm.

"I suppose you're goin' back to cane him, aren't you?" said he.

"Cane whom?" I said impatiently, for that intolerable thought which I have hinted at was now growing within my brain, and I must, *must* be alone to grapple with it.

"Cane the d——d painter, of course," said Sleaford, openinb his great blue eyes in wonder that such a question should be asked. "Awfully bad form that fellow goin' and puttin' your mother in the picture. But that's just the way with these fellows."

"What do you mean?" I asked again.

"What do I mean? The paintin' and writin' fellows. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, as I've often and often said to Cyril Aylwin; and by Jove, I'm right for once. I suppose I needn't ask you if you're going back to cane him."

"Wilderspin did what he did quite unconsciously," I replied, as I hailed a hansom. "It was the finger of God."

"The finger of—Oh come! That be hanged, old chap."

"Good-bye," I said, as I jumped into the hansom.

"But you don't mean to say you are goin' to let a man put your mother into——"

I heard no more. The terrible idea which had been growing in my brain, shaping itself out of a nebulous mass of reminiscences of what had just occurred at the studio, was now stinging me to madness. Wilderspin's extreme dejection, the strange way in which he had seemed inclined to evade answering my question as to the safety of Winifred, the look of pity on his face as at last he answered "quite safe"—what did all these indications portend? At every second the thought grew and grew, till my brain seemed like a vapour of fire, and my eyeballs seemed to scorch their sockets as I cried aloud: "Have I found her at last to lose her?"

On reaching the studio-door I rapped: before the servant had time to answer my summons, I rapped again till the sounds echoed along the street. When my summons was

answered, I rushed upstairs. Wilderspin stood at the studio-door, listening, apparently, to the sound of the blacksmith's anvil coming in from the back of Maud Street through the open window. Though his sorrowful face told all, I cried out, "Wilderspin, she's safe? You said she was safe?"

"My friend," said Wilderspin solemnly, "the news I have to give you is news that I knew you would rather receive when you could hear it alone."

"You said she was safe!"

"Yes, safe indeed! She whom you, under some strange but no doubt beneficent hallucination, believe to be the lady you lost in Wales, is safe indeed, for she is in the spirit-land with her whose blessing lent her to me—she has returned to her who was once a female blacksmith at Oldhill, and is now the brightest, sweetest, purest saint in Paradise."

Dead! My soul had been waiting for the word—expecting it ever since I left the studio with my mother—but now it sounded more dreadful than if it had come as a surprise.

"Tell me all," I cried, "at once—at once. She did not return, you say, on the day following the catastrophe—when did she return?—when did you next see her?"

"I never saw her again alive," answered Wilderspin mournfully; "but you are so pale, Mr. Aylwin, and your eyes are so wild, I had better defer telling you what little more there is to tell until you have quite recovered from the shock."

"No; now, now."

Wilderspin looked with a deep sigh at the picture of "Faith and Love," fired by the lights of sunset, where Winnie's face seemed alive.

"Well," said he, "as she did not come, I worked at my painting of 'Ruth' all day; and on the next morning, as I was starting for Primrose Court to seek her, Mrs. Gudgeon came kicking frantically at the street-door. When it was opened, she came stamping upstairs, and as I advanced to meet her, she shook her fists in my face, shouting out: 'I could tear your eyes out, you vagabones.' Why, what is the matter?' I asked in great surprise. 'You've bin and killed her, that's all,' said the woman, foaming at the mouth. She then told me that her daughter, almost immediately on reaching home after having left the studio in the company of my servant, had fallen down in a swoon. A suc-

cession of swoons followed. She never rallied. She was then lying dead in Primrose Court."

"And what then? Answer me quickly."

"She asked me to give her money that her daughter might be buried respectably and not by the parish. I told her it was all hallucination about the girl being her daughter, and that a spiritual body could not be buried, but she seemed so genuinely distressed that I gave her the money."

"Spiritual body! Hallucination!" I said. "I heard her voice in the London streets, and she was selling baskets at the theatre door. Where shall I find the house?"

"It is of no use for you to go there," he said.

"Nothing shall prevent my going at once." A feverish yearning had come upon me to see the body.

"If you will go," said Wilderspin, "it is No. 2, Primrose Court, Great Queen Street, Holborn."

## II.

I HURRIED out of the house, and soon finding a cab I drove to Great Queen Street.

My soul had passed now into another torture-chamber. It was being torn between two warring, maddening forces —the passionate desire to see her body, and the shrinking dread of undergoing the ordeal. At one moment I felt—as palpably as I felt it on the betrothal night—her slim figure, soft as a twine of flowers in my arms: at the next I was clasping a corpse—a rigid corpse in rags. And yet I can scarcely say that I had any thoughts. At Great Queen Street I dismissed the cab, and had some little difficulty in finding Primrose Court, a miserable narrow alley. I knocked at a door which, even in that light, I could see was a peculiarly wretched one. After a considerable delay the door was opened and a face peered out—the face of the woman whom I had seen in Cyril's studio. She did not at first seem to recognize me. She was evidently far gone in liquor, and looked at me, murmuring, "You're one o' the cussed body-snatchers; I know you: you belong to the Rose Alley 'Forty Thieves.' You'll swing—every man Jack o' ye'll swing yet, mind if you don't."

At the sight of the squalid house in which Winifred had lived and died I passed into a new world of horror. Dead matter had become conscious, and for a second or two it was not the human being before me, but the rusty iron, the broken furniture, the great patches of brick and dirty mortar where the plaster had fallen from the walls,—it was these which seemed to have life,—a terrible life—and to be talking to me, telling me what I dared not listen to about the triumph of evil over good. I knew that the woman was still speaking, but for a time I heard no sound—my senses could receive no impressions save from the sinister eloquence of the dead and yet living matter around me. Not an object there that did not seem charged with the wicked message of the heartless Fates.

At length, and as I stood upon the doorstep, a trembling, a mighty expectance, seized me like an ague-fit; and I heard myself saying, "I am come to see the body, Mrs. Gudgeon." Then I saw her peer, blinking, into my face, as she said:

"Oh, oh, it's *you*, is it? It's one o' the lot as keeps the studeros, is it?—the cussed Chelsea lot as killed her. I recklet yer a-starin' at the goddess Joker! So you'r come to see my poor darter's body, are you? How werry kind, to be sure! Pray come in, gentleman, an' pray let the beautiful goddess Joker be perlite an' show sich a nice kind wisiter the way up-stairs."

She took a candle, and with a mincing, mocking movement, curtseying low at every step, she backed before me, and then stood waiting at the foot of the staircase with a drunken look of satire on her features.

"Pray go up-stairs fust, gentleman," said she; "I can't think o' goin' up fust, an' lettin' my darter's kind wisiter foller behind like a sarvint. I 'opes we knows our manners better nor that comes to in Primrose Court."

"None of this foolery now, woman," said I. "There's a time for everything, you know."

"How right he is!" she exclaimed, nodding to the flickering candle in her hand. "There's a time for everythink, an' this is the time for makin' a peep-show of my pore darter's body. Oh, yes!"

I mounted a shaky staircase, the steps of which were some of them so broken away that the ascent was no easy matter. The miserable light from the woman's candle,

as I entered the room, seemed suddenly to shoot up in a column of dazzling brilliance that caused me to close my eyes in pain, so unnaturally sensitive had they been rendered by the terrible expectance of the sight that was about to sear them.

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When I re-opened my eyes, I perceived that in the room there was one window, which looked like a trap-door; on the red pantiles of the opposite roof lay a smoke-dimmed sheet of moonlight. On the floor at the further end of the garret, where the roof met the boards at a sharp angle, a mattress was spread. Then speech came to me.

"Not there!" I groaned, pointing to the hideous black-looking bed, and turning my head away in terror. The woman burst into a cackling laugh.

"Not there? Who said she *was* there? *I* didn't. If you can see anythink there besides a bed an' a quilt, you've got eyes as can make picturs out o' nothink, same as my darter's eyes could make 'em, pore dear."

"Ah, what do you mean?" I cried, leaping to the side of the mattress, upon which I now saw that no dead form was lying.

For a moment a flash of joy as dazzling as a fork of lightning seemed to strike through my soul and turn my blood into a liquid fire that rose and blinded my eyes.

"Not dead," I cried; "no, no, no! The pitiful heavens would have rained blood and tears at such a monstrous tragedy. She is not dead—not dead after all! The hideous dream is passing."

"Oh, ain't she dead, pore dear?—ain't she? She's dead enough for one," said the woman; "but 'ow can she be there on that mattress, when she's buried, an' the prayers read over her, like the darter of the most 'spectable mother as ever lived in Primrose Court! That's what the neighbours say o' me. The most 'spectable mother as ever——"

"Buried!" I said, "who buried her?"

"Who buried her? Why, the parish, in course."

Despair then again seemed to send a torrent of ice-water through my veins. But after a time the passionate desire to see her body leapt up within my heart.

At this moment Wilderspin, who had evidently followed

me with remarkable expedition, came upstairs and stood by my side.

"I must go and see the grave," I said to him. "I must see her face once more. I must petition the Home Secretary. Nothing can and nothing shall prevent my seeing her—no, not if I have to dig down to her with my nails."

"An' who the dickens are you as takes on so about my darter?" said the woman, holding the candle to my face.

"Drunken brute!" said I. "Where is she buried?"

"Well, I'm sure!" said the woman in a mincing, sarcastic voice. "How werry unperlite you is all at wunst! how werry rude you speaks to such a werry 'spectable party as I am! You seem to forgit who I am. Ain't I the goddess as likes to 'ave 'er little joke, an' likes to wet both eyes, and as plays sich larks with her flummeringeroes and drumming-dairies an' ring-tailed monkeys an' men?"

When I saw the creature whip up the quilt from the mattress, and holding it over her head like a veil, leer hideously in imitation of Cyril's caricature, a shudder went again through my frame—a strange kind of dementia came upon me; my soul again seemed to leave my body—seemed to be lifted through the air and beyond the stars, crying in agony, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Yet all the while, though my soul seemed fleeing through infinite space, where a pitiless universe was waltzing madly round a ball of cruel fire—all the while I was acutely conscious of looking down upon the dreadful dream-world below, looking down into a frightful garret where a dialogue between two dream-figures was going on—a dialogue between Wilderspin and the woman, each word of which struck upon my ears like a sharp-edged flint, though it seemed millions of miles away.

* * * * * *

"What made you trick me like this? Where is the money I gave you for the funeral?"

"That's werry true, about that money, an' where is it? The orkerdest question about money allus is—'Where is it?' The money for that funeral I 'ad, I won't deny that. The orkerd question ain't that: it's 'Where is it?' But you see, arter I left your studero I sets on that pore gal's bed a-cryin' fit to bust; then I goes out into Clement's Alley, and I calls on Mrs. Mix—that's a werry dear friend of mine,

the mother o' seven child'n as are allus a-settin' on my doorstep, an' she comes out of Yorkshire you must know, an' she's been a streaker in her day (for she was well off wonst was Mrs. Mix afore she 'ad them seven dirty-nosed child'n as sets on her neighbours' doorsteps)— an' she sez, sez she, 'My pore Meg' (meanin' me) I've bin the mother o' fourteen beautiful clean-nosed child'n, an' I've streaked an' buried seven on 'em, so I ought to know somethink about corpuses, an' I tell you this corpse o' your darter's must be streaked an' buried at wonst, for she died in a swownd. An' there's nothink like the parishes for buryin' folk quick, an' I dessay the coffin's ordered by this time, an' I dessay the gent gev you that money just to make you comfable like, seein' as he killed your darter.' That's what Mrs. Mix says to me. So the parish comed an' brought a coffin an' tookt her, pore dear. And I've cried myself stupid-like, bein' her pore mother as 'es lost her on'y darter —an' I was just a-tryin' to make myself comfable when this 'ere young toff as seems so werry drunk comes a-rappin' at my door fit to rap the 'ouse down."

"Has she been buried at all? How can a spiritual body be buried?"

"'Buried at all?' What do you mean by insinivatin' to the pore gal's conflicted mother as she p'rap's ain't buried at all? You're a-makin' me cry ag'in. She lays comfable enough underneath a lot of other coffins, in the pauper part of the New North Cimingtary."

"Underneath a lot of others; how can that be?"

"What! ain't you toffs never seed a pauper finneral? Now that's a pity; and sich nice toffs as they are, a-settin' theirselves up to look arter the darters o' pore folks. P'raps you never thought how we was buried. We're buried, when our time comes, and then they're werry kind to us, the parish toffs is:—It's in a lump—six at a time—as they buries us, and sich nice deal coffins they makes us, the parish toffs does, an' sich nice lamp-black they paints 'em with to make 'em look as if they was covered with the best black velvid; an' then sich a nice sarmint—none o' your retail sarmints, but a hulsale sarmint—they reads over the lot, an' into one hole they packs us one atop o' the other, jest like a pile o' the werry best Yarmith bloaters, an' that's a good deal more sociable an' comfable, the parish toffs thinks, than puttin' us in single; so it is, for the matter o' that."

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Then I heard no more; for at the intolerable picture called up by the woman's words, my soul in its misery seemed to have soared, scared and trembling, above and beyond the heavens at whose futile gates it had been moaning, till at last it sank at the feet of the mighty power that my love had striven with on the sands of Raxton when the tide was coming in—some pale and cruel ruler whose brow I saw wrinkled with the woman's mocking smile—some frightful columbine-queen, wicked, bowelless and blind, shaking a starry cap and bells, and chanting—

"I lent the drink of Day
To gods for feast;
I poured the river of Night
On gods surceased:
Their blood was Nin-ki-gal's."

And there at the feet of the awful jesting hag, Circumstance, I could only cry "Winnie! my poor Winnie!" while over my head seemed to pass Necessity and her black ages of despair.

When I came to myself I said to the woman:

"You can point out the grave?"

"Well, yes," said she, turning round sharply; "but may I ax who the dickens you are?—an' what makes you so cut up about a pore woman's darter? It's right-on beautiful to see how kind gentlemen is now-a-days"; and she turned and tried, stumbling, to lead the way downstairs.

As we left the room I turned round to look at it. The picture of the mattress, now nearly hidden in the shadows—the picture of the other furniture in the room—two chairs—or rather one and a part of a chair, for the rails of the back were gone—a table, a large brown jug, the handle of which had been replaced by a piece of string, and a white wash-hand basin, with most of the rim broken away, and a shallow tub apparently used for a bath—seemed to sink into my flesh as though bitten in by the etcher's aquafortis.

Winifred's sleeping room!

"Of course she wasn't her daughter," said Wilderspin, meditatively, as we stood on the stairs.

"Not my darter! Why, in course she was. What an imperent thing to say, sure*lie*!"

"There is one thing I wish to say to you," said he to the woman. "When I agreed with you as to the sum to be paid

for the model's sittings, it was clearly understood that she was to sit to no other artist, and that the match-selling was to cease."

"Well, and 'ave I broke my word?"

"A person has heard her singing and seen her selling baskets," I said.

"The person tells a lie," said the woman, with a dogged and sullen look, and in a voice that grew thicker with every word. "Ain't there sich things as doubles?"

At these last words my heart gave a sudden leap.

We left the house, and neither of us spoke till we got into the Strand.

"Did you see the—body at all?" I asked Wilderspin.

"Oh, yes. After I gave her the money for the funeral I went to Primrose Court. The woman took me upstairs, and there on the mattress lay—what the poor woman believed to be the earthly body of an earthly daughter. It was covered with a quilt. Over the face a ragged shawl had been thrown."

"Yes, yes. She raised the shawl?"

"Yes, the woman went and held the candle over the head of the mattress and uncovered the face; and there lay she whom the woman believed to be her daughter, and whom you believe to be the young lady you seek, but whom I *know* to be a spiritual body—the perfect type that was sent to me in order that I might fulfill my mission. You groan, Mr. Aylwin, but remember that you have lost only a dream, a beautiful hallucination; I have lost a reality: there is nothing real but the spiritual world."

## III.

As I wandered about the streets after parting from Wilderspin, what were my emotions? If I could put them into words, is there one human being in ten thousand who would understand me? Happily, no. For there is not one in ten thousand who, having sounded the darkest depths of human misery, will know how strong is Hope when at the true death-struggle with Despair. "Hope in the human breast," wrote my father, "is a passion, a wild, a lawless, and an indomitable passion, that almost no cruelty of Fate can conquer."

Many a passer-by in the streets of London that night must have asked himself, What lunatic is this at large? At one moment I would bound along the pavement as though propelled by wings, scarcely seeming to touch the pavement with my feet. At the next I would stop in a cold perspiration and say to myself, "Idiot, is it possible that you, so learned in suffering—you, whom Destiny, or Heaven, or Hell, has taken in hand as a special sport—can befool yourself with Hope now, after the terrible comedy by which you and the ancestral idiots from whom you sprang amused Queen Nin-ki-gal in Raxton crypt?"

Hope and Despair were playing at shuttlecock with my soul. Underneath my misery there flickered a thought which, wild as it was, I dared not dismiss—the thought that, after all, it *might* not be Winifred who had died in that den. Possible it was—however improbable—that I *might* be labouring under a delusion. My imagination *might* have exaggerated a resemblance into actual identity, and Winifred and she whom Wilderspin painted might be two different persons—and there might be hope even yet. But so momentous was the issue to my soul, that the mere fact of having clearly marshalled the arguments on the side of Hope made my reason critical and suspicious of their cogency. From the sweet sophisms that my reason had called up, I turned, and there stood Despair, ready for me behind a phalanx of arguments, which laughed all Hope's "ragged regiment" to scorn.

Had not my mother recognised her? Could the infallible perceptive faculties of my mother be also deceived?

But to accept the fact that she who died on that mattress was little Winnie of the sands was to go stark mad, and the very instinct of self-preservation made me clutch at every sophism Hope could offer.

"Did not the woman declare that the singing-girl and the model were *not* one and the same?" said Hope. "And if she did not lie, may you not have been, after all, hunting a shadow through London?

"It might not have been Winifred," I shouted.

But no sooner had I done so than the scene in the studio —Wilderspin's story of the model's terror on seeing my mother's portrait—came upon me, and "Dead! dead!" rang through me like a funereal knell; all the superstructure of Hope's sophisms was shattered in a moment like a house of

cards: my imagination flew away to all the London graveyards I had ever heard of; and there, in the part divided by the pauper line, my soul hovered over a grave newly made, and then dived down from coffin to coffin, one piled above another, till it reached Winifred, lying pressed down by the superincumbent mass; those eyes staring.

Yes; that night I was mad!

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I could not walk fatigue into my restless limbs.

Morning broke in curdling billows of fire over the east of London—which even at this early hour was slowly growing hazy with smoke. I found myself in Primrose Court, looking at that squalid door, those squalid windows. I knocked at the door. No answer came to my summons, and I knocked again and again. Then a window opened above my head, and I heard the well-known voice of the woman exclaiming:

"Who's that? Poll Onion's out to-night, and the rooms are emp'y 'cept mine. Why, God bless me, man, is it you?"

"Hag! that was not your daughter."

She slammed the window down.

"Let me in, or I will break the door."

The window was opened again.

"Lucky as I didn't leave the front door open to-night, as I mostly do. What do you want to skeer a pore woman for?" she bawled. "Go away, else I'll call up the people in Great Queen Street."

"Mrs. Gudgeon, all I want to do is to ask you a question."

"Ah, but that's what you jis' *won't* do, my fine gentleman. I don't let you in again in a hurry."

"I will give you a sovereign."

"Honour bright?" bawled the old woman; "let me look at it."

"Here it is in my hand."

"Jink it on the stuns."

I threw it down.

"Quid seems to jink all right, anyhow," she said, "though I'm more used to jink of a tanner than a quid in these cussed times. You won't skeer me if I come down?"

"No, no."

At last I heard her fumbling inside at the lock and then the door opened.

"Why, man alive! your eyes are afire jist like a cat's wi' drownded kitlins."

"She was not your daughter."

"Not my darter?" said she, as she stopped to pick up the sovereign. "You ain't a-goin' to catch me the likes o' that. The Beauty not my darter! All the court knows she was my own on'y darter. I'll swear afore all the beaks in London as I'm the mother of my on'y darter Winifred, allus wur 'er mother, and allus wull be; an' if she went a-beggin' it worn't my fort. She liked beggin', poor dear; some gals does."

"Her name Winifred!" I cried, with a pang at my heart as sharp as though there had been a reasonable hope till now.

"In course her name was Winifred."

"Liar! How came she to be called Winifred?"

"Well, I'm sure! Mayn't a Welsh-man's wife give her own on'y Welsh darter a Welsh name? Us poor folks is come to somethink! P'raps you'll say I ain't a Welsh-man's wife next? It's your own cussed lot as killed her, ain't it? What did I tell the shiny Quaker when fust I tookt her to the studero? I sez to the shiny un, 'She's jist a bit touched here,' I sez" (tapping her own head), "'and nothink upsets her so much as to be arsted a lot o' questions,' I sez to the shiny un. 'The less you talks to her,' I sez, 'the better you'll get on with her,' I sez, 'and the better kind o' pictur you'll make out on her,' I sez to the shiny un; 'an' don't you go an' arst who her father is,' I sez, 'for that word 'ull bring such a horful look on her face,' I sez, 'as is enough to skeer anybody to death. I sha'n't forget the look the fust time I seed it,' I sez. That's what I sez to the shiny Quaker. An' yit you did go an' worrit 'er, a-arstin' 'er a lot o' questions about 'er father. You *did* —I know you did! You *must* 'a' done it—so no lies; for that wur the on'y thing as ever skeered 'er, arstin' 'er about 'er father, pore dear. . . . Why, man alive! what *are* you a-gurnin' at? an' what are you a-smackin' your forred wi' your 'and like that for, an' a-gurnin' in my face like a Chessy cat? Blow'd if I don't b'lieve you're drunk. An' who the dickens are you a-callin' a fool, Mr. Imperance?"

It was not the woman but myself I was cursing when I cried out, "Fool! besotted fool!"

Not till now had the wild hope fled which had led me

back to the den. As I stood shuddering on the door-step in the cold morning light, while the whole unbearable truth broke in upon me, I could hear her lips murmuring:

"Fool of ancestral supersitions! Fenella Stanley's fool! Philip Aylwin's fool! Where was the besotted fool and plaything of besotted ancestors, when the truth was burning so close beneath his eyes that it is wonderful they were not scorched into recognising it? Where was he when, but for superstitions grosser than those of the negroes on the Niger banks, he might have saved the living heart and centre of his little world? Where was the rationalist when but for superstitions sucked in with his mother's milk, he would have gone to a certain studio, seen a certain picture which would have sent him on the wings of the wind to find and rescue and watch over the one for whom he had renounced all the ties of kindred? Where was then the most worthy descendant of a line of ancestral idiots—Romany and Gorgio—stretching back to the days when man's compeers, the mammoth and the cave-bear, could have taught him better? Rushing down to Raxton church to save her! —to save her by laying a poor little trinket upon a dead man's breast!"

After the paroxysm of self-scorn had partly exhausted itself, I stood staring in the woman's face.

"Well," said she, "I thought the shiny Quaker was a rum 'un, but blow me if you ain't a rummyer."

"Her name was Winifred, and the word 'Father' produced fits," I said, not to the woman, but to my soul, in mocking answer to its own woe. "What about my father's spiritualism now? Good God! Is there no other ancestral tomfoolery, no other of Superstition's patent Aylwinian soul-salves for the philosophical Nature-worshipper and apostle of rationalism to fly to? Her name was Winifred!"

"Yis; don't I say 'er name wur Winifred?" said the woman, who thought I was addressing her. "You're jist like a poll-parrit with your 'Winifred, Winifred, Winifred.' That was 'er name, an' she 'ad a shock, pore dear, an' it was all along of you at the studero a-talkin' about 'er father. You *must* a-talked about 'er father: so no lies. She 'ad fits arter that, in course she 'ad. Why, you'll make me die a-larfin' with your poll-parritin' ways, sayin' 'a shock, a shock, a shock,' arter me. In course she 'ad a shock; she

'ad it when she was a little gal o' six. My pore Bill (that's my 'usband as now lives in the fine 'Straley) was a'most killed a'fightin' a Irishman. They brought 'im 'um an' laid 'im afore 'er werry eyes, an' the sight throw'd 'er into high-strikes, an' arter that the name of 'father' allus throwed 'er into high-strikes, an' that's why I told 'em at the studero never to say that word. An' I know you *must* 'a' said it, some o' your cussed lot must, or else why should my pore darter 'a' 'ad the high-strikes? Nothin' else never gev 'er no high-strikes only talkin' to 'er about 'er father. An' as to me a-sendin' 'er a-beggin', I tell you she liked beggin'. I gev her baskets to sell, an' flowers to sell, an' yet she *would* beg. I tell you she liked beggin'. Some gals does. She was touched in the 'ead, an' she used to say she *must* beg, an' there was nothink she used to like so much as to stan' with a box o' matches a-jabberin' a tex' out o' the Bible unless it was singin'. There you are, a-larfin' and a-gurnin' agin. If I wur on'y 'arf as drunk as you are the coppers 'ud 'a' run *me* in hours ago; cuss 'em, an' their favouritin' ways."

At the truth flashing in upon me through these fantastic lies, I had passed into that mood when the grotesque wickedness of Fate's awards can draw from the victim no loud lamentations—when there are no frantic blows aimed at the sufferer's own poor eyeballs till the beard—like the self-mutilated Theban king's—is bedewed with a dark hail-shower of blood. More terrible because more inhuman than the agony imagined by the great tragic poet is that most awful condition of the soul into which I had passed—when the cruelty that seems to work at Nature's heart, to vitalize a dark universe of pain, loses its mysterious aspect and becomes a mockery; when the whole vast and merciless scheme seems too monstrous to be confronted save by mad peals of derisive laughter—that dreadful laughter which bubbles lower than the fount of tears—that laughter which is the heart's last language; when no words can give it the relief of utterance—no words, nor wails, nor moans.

"Another quid," bawled the woman after me, as I turned away, "another quid, an' then I'll tell you somethink to your awantage. Out with it, and don't spile a good mind."

What I did and said that morning as I wandered through

the streets of London in that state of tearless despair and mad unnatural merriment, one hour of which will age a man more than a decade of any woe that can find a voice in lamentations, remains a blank in my memory.

I found myself at the corner of Essex Street, staring across the Strand, which, even yet, had scarcely awoke into life. Presently I felt my sleeve pulled, and heard the woman's voice.

"You didn't know as I was cluss behind you all the while, a-watchin' your tantrums. Never spile a good mind, my young swell. Out with t'other quid, an' then I'll tell you somethink about my pootty darter as is on my mind."

I gave her money, but got nothing from her save more incoherent lies and self-contradictions about the time of the funeral.

"Point out the spot where she used to stand and beg. No, don't stand on it yourself, but point it out."

"This is the werry spot. She used to hold out her matches like this 'ere,—my darter used,—an' say texes out o' the Bible. She loved beggin', pore dear!"

"Texts from the Bible?" I said, staggering under a new thought that seemed to strike through me like a bar of hot metal. "Can you remember any one of them?"

"It was allus the same tex', an' I ought to remember it well enough, for I've 'eerd it times enough. She wur like you for poll-parrittin' ways, and used to say the same thing over an' over agin. It wur allus, 'Let his children be wagabones and beg their bread; let them seek it also out of desolate places.' Why, you're at it ag'in—gurnin' ag'in. You *must* be drunk."

Again there came upon me the involuntary laughter of heart-agony at its tensest. I cried aloud: "Faith and Love! Faith and Love! That farce of the Raxton crypt with the great-grandmother's fool on his knees shall be repeated for the delight of Nin-ki-gal and the Danish skeletons and the ancestral ghosts from Hugh the Crusader down to the hero of the knee-caps and mittens; and there shall be a dance of death and a song, and the burden shall be—

> "'As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods:
> They kill us for their sport.'"

Misery had made me a maniac at last; my brain swam, and the head of the woman seemed to be growing before

me—seemed once more to be transfigured before me into a monstrous mountainous representation of an awful mockery-goddess and columbine-queen, down whose merry wrinkles were flowing tears that were at once tears of Olympian laughter and tears of the oceanic misery of Man.

"Well, you *are* a rum 'un, and no mistake," said the woman. "But who the dickens *are* you? *That's* what licks me. Who the dickens *are* you? Howsomever, if you'll fork out another quid, the Queen of the Jokes'll tell you some'ink to your awantage, an' if you won't fork out the Queen o' the Jokes is mum."

I stood and looked at her—looked till the street seemed to heave under my feet and the houses to rock. After this I seem to have wandered back to Wilderspin's studio, and there to have sunk down unconscious.

# XII.

# The Revolving Cage of Circumstance

# XII.—THE REVOLVING CAGE OF CIRCUMSTANCE

## I.

I WILL not trouble the reader with details of the illness that came upon me as the result of my mental agony and physical exhaustion. At intervals I was aware of what was going on around me, but for the most part I was in a semi-comatose state. I realised at intervals that a medical man was sitting by my side, as I lay in bed. Then I had a sense of being moved from place to place; and then of being rocked by the waves. Slowly the periods of consciousness became more frequent and also more prolonged.

My first exclamation was—"Dead! Have I been ill?" and I tried to raise myself in vain.

"Yes, very ill," said a voice, my mother's.

"Dangerously?"

"For several days you were in danger. Your recovery now entirely depends upon your keeping yourself calm."

"I am out at sea?"

"Yes," said my mother; "in Lord Sleaford's yacht."

"How did I come here?"

"Well, Henry, I was so anxious to wait for a day or two to learn the sequel of the dreadful tragedy, that I persuaded Lord Sleaford to delay sailing. Next day he called at Belgrave Square, and told us he had heard that you had been taken suddenly ill and were lying unconscious at the studio. I went at once and saw the medical man, Mr. Finch, whom Mr. Wilderspin had called in. This gentleman took a serious view of your case. When I asked him what could be done he said that nothing would benefit you so much as removal from London, and recommended a sea voyage. It occurred to me at once to ask Lord Sleaford if we might

take you in his yacht, and he with his usual good nature agreed, and agreed also that Mr. Finch should accompany us as your medical attendant."

"You know all?" I said; "you know that she is dead."

"Alas! yes."

At that moment the doctor came into the cabin, and my mother retired.

"When did you last see Wilderspin?" I asked Mr. Finch.

"Before leaving England to join a friend in Paris he went to Belgrave Square to get tidings of you, and I was there."

"He told you—what had occurred to make me ill?"

"He told me that it was the death of some one in whom you took an interest, a model of his, but told it in such a wild and excited way that I lost patience with him. His addled brains are crammed with the wildest and most ignorant superstitions."

"Did you ask him about her burial?"

"I did. I gathered from him that she was buried by the parish in the usual way. But I assure you the man's account of everything that occurred was so bewildered and so incoherent that I could really make nothing out of him. What is his creed? Is it Swedenborgianism? He seems to think that the model he has lost is a spirit (or spiritual body, to use his own jargon) sent to him by the artistic-minded spirits for entirely artistic purposes, but snatched from him now by the mean jealousy of the same spirit-world."

"But what did he say about her burial?"

"Well, he seems not to have ignored so completely the mundane question of burying this spiritual body as his creed would have warranted, for he gave the mother money to bury it. The mother, however, seems to have spent the money in gin and to have left the duty of burying the spiritual body to the parish, who make short work of all bodies; and, of course, by the parish she was buried, you may rest assured of that, though the artist seems to think that she was simply translated to heaven like Elijah."

"I must return to England at once," I said. "I shall apply to the Home Secretary to have the body disinterred."

"Why, sir?"

"In order that she may be buried in a proper place, to be sure."

"No use. You have no *locus standi*."

"What do you mean?"

"You are not a relative, and to ask for a disinterment for such an unimportant reason as that you, a stranger, would prefer to see her buried elsewhere, would be idle."

Sleaford now came into the cabin. I thanked him for his kindness, but told him I must return at once.

"Even if your health permitted," he said, "it is impossible for the yacht to go back. I have an appointment to meet a yachting friend. But in any case depend upon it, old fellow, the doctor won't hear of your returning for a long while yet. He told me not five minutes ago that nothing but sea air, and keeping your mind tranquil, you know, will restore you."

The feeling of exhaustion that came upon me as he spoke convinced me that there was only too much truth in his words. I felt that I must yield to the inevitable; but as to tranquillity of mind, my entire being was now filled with a yearning to see the New North Cemetery—to see her grave. I seemed to long for the very pang which I knew the sight of the grave would give me.

It is of course impossible for me to linger over that cruise, or to record any of the incidents that took place at the ports at which we touched and landed. My recovery, or rather my partial recovery, was slower than the doctor had anticipated. Weeks and months passed, and still there seemed but little improvement in me.

The result was that I was obliged to yield to the importunities of my mother, and to the urgent advice of Dr. Finch, to remain on board Sleaford's yacht during the entire cruise, and afterwards to go with them to Italy.

Absence from England gave me not the smallest respite from the grief that was destroying me.

My parting with my mother was a very pathetic one. She was greatly changed, and I knew why. The furrows Time sets on the face can never be mistaken for those which are caused by the passions. The struggle between pride and remorse had been going on apace; her sufferings had been as great as my own.

It was in Rome we parted. We were sitting in the cool, perfumed atmosphere of St. Peter's, and for the moment a soothing wave seemed to pass over my soul. For some

little time there had been silence between us. At length I said, "Mother, it seems strange indeed for me to have to say to you that you blamed yourself too much for the part you took in the tragedy of Winnie. When you sent her into Wales you didn't know that her aunt was dead; you did it, as you thought, for her good as well as for mine."

She rose as if to embrace me and then sank down again.

"But you don't know all, Henry; you don't know all. I knew her aunt was dead, though Shales did not, or he would never have taken her. All that concerned me was to get her away before your own recovery. I thought there might be relatives of hers or friends whom Shales might find. But I was possessed by a frenzied desire to get her away. For years my eyes had been fixed on the earldom. I had been told by your aunt that Cyril was consumptive, and also that he was very unlikely to marry."

I could not suppress a little laugh. "Ha, ha! Cyril consumptive! No man's stronger and sounder, I am glad to tell you; but if by ill-chance he should die and the title should come to me, then, mother, I'll wear the coronet, and it shall be made of the best gingerbread gilt and ornamented thus. I'll give public lectures on the British aristocracy and its origin, and its present relations to the community, and my audience shall consist of society—that society which is so much to aunt and the likes of her. Society shall be my audience, and then, after my course of lectures is over, I will join the Gypsies. But pray pardon me, mother. I had no idea I should thus lose my temper. I should not have lost it so entirely had I not witnessed how you are suffering from the tyranny of this blatant bugbear called 'Society.'"

"'My suffering, Henry, has brought me nearer to your line of thought than you may suppose. It has taught me that when the affections are deeply touched everything which before had seemed so momentous stands out in a new light, that light in which the insignificance of the important stands revealed. In that terrible conflict between you and me on the night following the landslip, you spoke of my 'cruel pride.' Oh, Henry, if you only knew how that cruel pride had been wiped out of existence by remorse, I believe that even you would forgive me. I believe that even she would if she were here."

"I told you that I had entirely forgiven you, mother, and

that I was sure Winnie would forgive you if she were alive."

"You did, Henry, but it did not satisfy me; I felt that you did not know all."

"I fear you have been very unhappy," I said.

"I have been constantly thinking of Winifred a beggar in the streets as described by Wilderspin. Oh, Henry, I used to think of her in the charge of that woman. And Miss Dalrymple, who educated her, tells me that in culture she was far above the girls of her own class; and this makes the degradation into which she was forced through me the more dreadful for me to think of. I used to think of her dying in the squalid den, and then the Italian sunshine has seemed darker than a London fog. Even the comfort that your kind words gave me was incomplete, for you did not know the worst features of my cruelty."

"But have you had no respite, mother? Surely the intensity of this pain did not last, or it would have killed you."

"The crisis did pass, for, as you say, had it lasted in its most intense form, it would have killed me or sent me mad. After a while, though remorse was always with me, I seemed to become in some degree numbed against its sting. I could bear at last to live, but that was all. Yet there was always one hour out of twenty-four when I was overmastered by pathetic memories, such as nearly killed me with pity—one hour when, in a sudden and irresistible storm, grief would still come upon me with almost its old power. This was on awaking in the early morning. I learnt then that if there is trouble in the founts of life, there is nothing which stirs that trouble like the twitter of the birds at dawn. At Florence, I would, after spending the day in wandering with you through picture galleries or about those lovely spots near Fiesole, go to bed at night tolerably calm; I would sink into a sleep, haunted no longer by those dreams of the tragedy in which my part had been so cruel, and yet the very act of waking in the morning would bring upon me a whirlwind of anguish; and then would come the struggling light at the window, and the twitter of the birds that seemed to say, 'Poor child, poor child!' and I would bury my face in my pillow and moan."

When I looked in her face, I realised for the first time that not even such a passion of pity as that which had aged

me is so cruel in its ravages as Remorse. To gaze at her was so painful that I turned my eyes away.

When I could speak I said:

"I have forgiven you from the bottom of my heart, mother, but, if that does not give you comfort, is there anything that will?"

"Nothing, Henry, nothing but what is impossible for me ever to get—the forgiveness of the wronged child herself. *That* I can never get in this world. I dare only hope that by prayers and tears I may get it in the end. Oh, Henry, if I were in heaven I could never rest until I had sought her out, and found her and thrown myself on her neck and said, 'Forgive your persecutor, my dear, or this is no place for me.'"

## II.

As soon as I reached London, thinking that Wilderspin was still on the Continent, I went first to D'Arcy's studio, but was there told that D'Arcy was away—that he had been in the country for a long time, busy painting, and would not return for some months. I then went to Wilderspin's studio, and found, to my surprise and relief, that he and Cyril had returned from Paris. I learnt from the servant that Wilderspin had just gone to call on Cyril; accordingly to Cyril's studio I went.

"He is engaged with the Gypsy-model, sir," said Cyril's man, pointing to the studio door, which was ajar. "He told me that if ever you should call you were to be admitted at once. Mr. Wilderspin is there too."

"You need not announce me," I said as I pushed open the door.

Entering the studio, I found myself behind a tall easel where Cyril was at work. I was concealed from him, and also from Wilderspin and Sinfi. On my left stood Cyril's caricature of Wilderspin's "Faith and Love," upon which the light from a window was falling aslant.

Before I could pass round the easel into the open space I was arrested by overhearing a conversation between Cyril, Sinfi and Wilderspin.

They were talking about *her*!

With my eyes fixed on Cyril's caricature on my left hand,

I stood, every nerve in my body seeming to listen to the talk, while the veil of the goddess-queen in the caricature appeared to become illuminated; the tragedy of our love (from the spectacle of her father's dead body shining in the moonlight, with a cross on his breast, down to the hideous-grotesque scene of the woman at the corner of Essex Street, appeared to be represented on the veil of the mocking Queen in little pictures of scorching flame. These are the words I heard:

"Keep your head in that position, Lady Sinfi," said Cyril, "and pray do not get so excited."

"I thought I felt the Swimmin' Rei in the room," said Sinfi.

"What do you mean?"

"I thought I felt the stir of him in my burk [bosom]. Howsomever, it must ha' bin all a fancy o' mine. But you see, Mr. Cyril, she wur once a friend o' mine. I want to know what skeared her? If it *was* her as set for the pictur, she'd never 'a' had the fit if she hadn't 'a' bin skeared. I s'pose Mr. Wilderspin didn't go an' say the word 'feyther' to her? I s'pose he didn't go an' ax her who her feyther was?"

I heard Wilderspin's voice say, "No, indeed. *I* would never have asked who her father was. Ah, Mr. Cyril, I knew how mysteriously she had come to me; why should I ask who was her father? Her earthly parentage was all an illusion. But you will remember that I was not in the studio at the time of the fit. Mr. Ebury had called about a commission, and I had gone into the next room to speak to him. You came into the studio at the time, Mr. Cyril. When I returned, I found her in the fit, and you standing over her."

"No, don't get up, Sinfi, my girl," I heard Cyril say. "Sit down quietly, and I will tell you what passed. There is no doubt I did ask her about her father, poor thing; but I did it with the best intentions—did it for her good, as I thought—did it to learn whether she had been kidnapped, and certainly not from idle curiosity."

"Scepticism, the curse of the age," said Wilderspin.

I heard Cyril say, "Who could have thought it would turn out so? But you yourself had told me, Wilderspin, of Mother Gudgeon's injunction not to ask the girl who her father was, and of course it had upon me the opposite

effect the funny hag had intended it to have upon you. It was hard to believe that such a flower could have sprung from such a root. I thought it very likely that the woman had told you this to prevent your getting at the truth about their connection; so I decided to question the model myself, but determined to wait till you had had a good number of sittings, lest there should come a quarrel with the woman."

"Well, an' so you asked her?" said Sinfi.

"I thought the moment had come for me to try to read the puzzle," said Cyril. "So, on that day when Ebury called when you, Wilderspin, had left us together, I walked up to her and said, 'Is your father alive?'"

"Ah!" cried Sinfi, "it was as I thought. It was the word 'feyther' as killed her! An' what'll become o' *him*?"

"The word 'father' seemed to shoot into her like a bullet," said Cyril. "She shrieked 'Father,' and her face looked——"

"No, don't tell me how she looked!" said Sinfi. "Mr. Wilderspin's pictur' o' the witch and the lady shows how she looked—whoever she was. But if it was Winnie Wynne, what'll become o' *him*?"

Then I heard Cyril address Wilderspin again. "We had great difficulty, you remember, Wilderspin, in bringing her round, and afterwards I took her out of the house, put her into a cab, and you directed your servant whither to take her."

"It was scepticism that ruined all," I heard Wilderspin say.

"And yet," said Sinfi, "the Golden Hand on Snowdon told as he'd marry Winifred Wynne. Ah! surely the Swimmin' Rei is in the room! I thought I heard that choke come in his throat as comes when he frets about Winnie. Howsomever, I s'pose it must ha' bin all a fancy o' mine."

"You make *me* laugh, Sinfi, about this golden hand of yours that is stronger than the hand of Death," said Cyril; "and yet I wish from my heart I could believe it."

"My poor mammy used to say, 'The Gorgios believes when they ought to disbelieve, and they disbelieve when they ought to believe, and that gives the Romanies a chance.'"

"Sinfi Lovell," said Wilderspin, "that saying of your mother's touches at the very root of romantic art."

"Well, if Gorgios don't believe enough, Sinfi,—if there is

not enough superstition among certain Gorgio acquaintances of mine, it's a pity," said Cyril.

"I don't know what you are a-talkin' about with your romantic art an' sich like, but I *do* know that nothink can't go agin the dukkeripen o' the clouds, but if I was on Snowdon with my crwth I could soon tell for sartin whether she's alive or dead," said Sinfi.

"And how?" said Cyril.

"How? By playin' on the hills the old Welsh dukkerin tune* as she was so fond on. If she was dead, she wouldn't hear it, but if she was alive she would, and her living mullo† 'ud come to it," said Sinfi.

"Do you believe that possible?" said Cyril, turning to Wilderspin.

"My friend," said Wilderspin, "I was at that moment repeating to myself certain wise and pregnant words quoted from an Oriental book by the great Philip Aylwin—words which tell us that he is too bold who dares say what he will believe, what disbelieve, not knowing in any wise the mind of God—not knowing in any wise his own heart and what it shall one day suffer."

"But," said Sinfi, "about her as sat to Mr. Wilderspin; did she never talk at all, Mr. Cyril?"

"Never; but I saw her only three times," said Cyril.

"Mr. Wilderspin," said Sinfi, "did she never talk?"

"Only once, and that was when the woman addressed her as Winifred. That name set me thinking about the famous Welsh saint and those wonderful miracles of hers, and I muttered 'St. Winifred.' The face of the model immediately grew bright with a new light, and she spoke the only words I ever heard her speak."

"You never told me of this," said Cyril.

"She stooped," said Wilderspin, "and went through a strange kind of movement, as though she were dipping water from a well, and said, 'Please, St. Winifred, bless the holy water and make it cure——'"

"Ah, for God's sake stop!" cried Sinfi. "Look! the Swimmin' Rei! He's in the room! There he stan's, and he's a-hearin' every word, an' it'll kill him outright!"

I stared at Cyril's picture of Lœna for which Sinfi was sitting. I heard her say:

*Incantation song.
†Wraith or fetch.

"There ain't nothink so cruel as seein' him take on like that," said Sinfi. "I've seed it afore, many's the time, in old Wales. You'll find her yit. The dukkeripen says you'll marry her yit, and you will. She can't be dead when the sun and the golden clouds say you'll marry her at last. Her as is dead *must* ha' been somebody else."

"Sinfi, you know there is no hope."

"It might not ha' bin your Winnie, arter all," said she. "It might ha' bin some poor innocent as her feyther used to beat. It's wonderful how cruel Gorgio feythers is to poor born naterals. And she might ha' heerd in London about St. Winifred's Well a-curin' people."

"Sinfi," I said, "you know there is no hope. And I have no friend but you now—I am going back to the Romanies."

"No, no, brother," she said, "never no more."

She put on her shawl. I rose mechanically. When she bade Cyril and Wilderspin good-bye and passed out of the studio, I did so too. In the street she stood and looked wistfully at me, as though she saw me through a mist, and then bade me good-bye, saying that she must go to Kingston Vale where her people were encamped in a hired field. We separated, and I wandered I knew not whither.

## III.

I FOUND myself inquiring for the New North Cemetery, and after a time I stood looking through the bars of tall iron gates at long lines of gravestones and dreary hillocks before me. Then I went in, walking straight over the grass towards a grave-digger in the sunshine. He looked at me, resting his foot on his spade.

"I want to find a grave."

"What part was the party buried in?"

"The pauper part," I said.

"Oh," said he, losing suddenly his respectful tone. "When was she buried? I suppose it was a she by the look o' you."

"When? I don't know the date."

"Rather a wide order that, but there's the pauper part." And he pointed to a spot at some little distance, where there were no gravestones and no shrubs. I walked across to this Desert of Poverty, which seemed too cheerless for

a place of rest. I stood and gazed at the mounds till the black coffins underneath grew upon my mental vision, and seemed to press upon my brain. Thoughts I had none, only a sense of being another person.

The man came slowly towards me, and then looked meditatively into my face. I shall never forget him. A tall, sallow, emaciated man he was, with cheek-bones high and sharp as an American Indian's, and straight black hair. He looked like a wooden image of Mephistopheles, carved with a jack-knife.

"Who are you?" The words seemed to come, not from the gravedigger's mouth, but from those piles of lamp-blacked coffins which were searing my eyes through four feet of graveyard earth. By the fever-fires in my brain I seemed to see the very faces of the corpses.

"Who am I?" I said, to myself as I thought, but evidently aloud; "I am the Fool of Superstition. I am Fenella Stanley's Fool, and Sinfi Lovell's Fool, and Philip Aylwin's Fool, who went and averted a curse from one of the heads resting down here, averted a curse by burying a jewel in a dead man's tomb."

"Not in this cemetery, so none o' your gammon," said the gravedigger who had overheard me. "The on'y people as is fools enough to bury jewels with dead bodies is the Gypsies, and *they* take precious good care, as I know, to keep it mum *where* they bury 'em. There's bin as much diggin' for them thousand guineas as was buried with Jerry Chilcott in Foxleigh parish, where I was born, as would more nor pay for emptying a gold mine; but I never heard o' Christian folk a-buryin' jewels. But who are you?"

I felt a hand upon my shoulder, and looking round, I found Sinfi by my side.

"Does he belong to you, my gal?"

"Yis," said Sinfi, with a strange, deep ring in her rich contralto voice. "Yis, he belong to me now—leastways he's my pal now—whatever comes on it."

"Then take him away, my wench. What's the matter with him? The old complaint, I s'pose," he added, lifting his hand to his mouth as though drinking from a glass.

Sinfi gently put out her hand and brushed the man aside.

"I've bin a-followin' on you all the way, brother," said Sinfi, as we moved out of the cemetery, "for your looks skeared me a bit. Let's go away from this place."

"But whither, Sinfi? I have no friend but you; I have no home."

"No home, brother? The kairengros* has got about everythink, 'cept the sky an' the wind, an' you're one o' the the richest kairengros on 'em all—leastways so I wur told t'other day in Kingston Vale. It's the Romanies, brother, as ain't got no home, 'cept the sky an' the wind. Howsumever, that's nuther here nor there; we'll jist go to the woman they told me on, an' if there's any truth to be torn out on her, out it'll ha' to come, if I ha' to tear out her windpipe with it."

We took a cab and were soon in Primrose Court.

The front door was wide open—fastened back. Entering the narrow common passage, we rapped at a dingy inner door. It was opened by a pretty girl, whose thick chestnut hair and eyes to match contrasted richly with the dress she wore—a dirty black dress, with great patches of lining bursting through holes like a whity-brown froth.

"Meg Gudgeon?" said the girl in answer to our inquiries; and at first she looked at us rather suspiciously, "upstairs, she's very bad—like to die—I'm a-seein' arter 'er. Better let 'er alone; she bites when she's in 'er tantrums."

"We's friends o' hern," said Sinfi, whose appearance and decisive voice seemed to reassure the girl.

"Oh, if you're friends that's different," said she. "Meg's gone off 'er 'ead; thinks the p'leace in plain clothes are after 'er."

We went up the stairs. The girl followed us. When we reached a low door, Sinfi proposed that she should remain outside on the landing, but within ear-shot, as "the sight o' both on us, all of a suddent, might make the poor body all of a dither if she was very ill."

The girl then opened the door and went in. I heard the woman's voice say in answer to her:

"Friend? Who is it? Are you sure, Poll, it ain't a copper in plain clothes come about that gal?"

The girl came out, and signalling me to enter, went leisurely down-stairs. Leaving Sinfi outside on the landing, I entered the room. There, on a sort of truckle-bed in one corner, I saw the woman. She slowly raised herself up on her elbows to stare at me. I took for granted that she would recognise me at once; but either because she was

*The roof-dwellers.

in drink when I saw her last, or because she had got the idea of a policeman in plain clothes, she did not seem to know me. Then a look of dire alarm broke over her face and she said:

"P'leaceman, I'm as hinicent about that air gal as a new-born babe."

"Mrs. Gudgeon," I said, "I only want you to tell a friend of mine about your daughter."

"Oh, yis! a friend o' yourn! Another or two on ye in plain clothes behind the door, I dessay. An' pray who said the gal wur my darter? What for do you want to put words into the mouth of a hinicent dyin' woman? I comed by 'er 'onest enough. The pore half-starved thing came up to me in Llanbeblig churchyard."

"Llanbeblig churchyard?" I exclaimed, drawing close up to the bed. "How came you in Llanbeblig churchyard?" But then I remembered that, according to her own story, she had married a Welshman.

"How did I come in Llanbeblig churchyard?" said the woman in a tone in which irony and fear were strangely mingled. "Well, p'leaceman, I don't mean to be sarcy; but seein' as all my pore dear 'usband's kith and kin o' the name of Goodjohn was buried in Llanbeblig churchyard, p'raps you'll be kind enough to let me go there sometimes, an' p'raps be buried there when my time comes."

"But what took you there?" I said.

"What took me to Llanbeblig churchyard?" exclaimed the woman, whose natural dogged courage seemed to be returning to her. "What made me leave every fardin' I had in the world with Poll Onion, when we ommust wanted bread, an' go to Carnarvon on Shanks's pony? I sha'n't tell ye. I comed by the gal 'onest enough, an' she never comed to no 'arm through me, less mendin' 'er cloes for 'er, and bringin' 'er to London, and bein' a mother to her, an' givin' 'er a few baskets an' matches to sell is a-doin' 'er any 'arm. An' as to beggin' she *would* beg, she loved to beg an' say texes."

"Old kidnapper!" I cried, maddened by the visions that came upon me. "How do I know that she came to no harm with a wretch like you?"

The woman shrank back upon the pillows in a revival of her terror. "She never comed to no harm, p'leaceman. No, no, she never comed to no harm through me. I'd a darter

once o' my own, Jenny Gudgeon by name—p'raps you know'd 'er, most o' the coppers did—as was brought up by my sister by marriage at Carnarvon, an' I sent for 'er to London, I did, p'leaceman—God forgi'e me—and she went wrong all through me bein' a drinkin' woman and not seein' arter 'er, just as my son Bob tookt to drink, through me bein' a drinkin' woman an' not seein' arter *him*. She tookt and went from bad to wuss, bad to wuss; it's my belief as it's allus starvation as drives 'em to it; an' when she wur a-dyin' gal, she sez to me, 'Mother,' sez she, 'I've got the smell o' Welsh vi'lets on me ag'in: I wants to be buried in Llanbeblig churchyard, among the Welsh child'n an' maids, mother. I wants to feel the snowdrops, an' smell the vi'lets, an' the primroses, a-growin' over my 'ead,' sez she; 'but that can't never be, mother,' sez she, a-sobbin' fit to bust; 'never, never, for such as me,' sez she. An' I know'd what she ment, though she never once blamed me, an' 'er words stuck in my gizzard like a thorn, p'leaceman."

"But what has all this to do with the girl you kidnapped?"

"Ain't I a-tellin' on ye as fast as I can? When my pore gal dropped off to sleep, I sez to Polly Onion, 'Poll,' I sez, 'to-morrow mornin' I'll pop everythink as ain't popped a'ready, and I'll leave you the money to see arter 'er, and I'il start for Carnarvon on Shanks's pony. I knows a good many on the roads,' sez I, 'as won't let Jokin' Meg want for a crust and a sup, and when I gits to Carnarvon I'll ax 'er aunt to bury 'er (she sells fish, 'er aunt does,' sez I, 'and she's got a pot o' money), an' then I'll see the parson or the sexton or somebody,' sez I, 'an' I'll tell 'em I've got a darter in London as is goin' to die, a Carnarvon gal by family, an' I'll tell 'im she ain't never bin married, an' then they'll bury 'er where she can smell the primroses and the vi'lets.' That's what I sez to Poll Onion, an' then Poll she begins to pipe, an' sez, 'Oh Meg, Meg, ain't I a Carnarvon gal too? The likes o' us ain't a-goin' to grow no vi'lets an' snowdrops in Llanbeblig churchyard.' An' I sez to her, 'What a d—d fool you are, Poll! You never 'adn't a gal as went wrong through you a-drinkin', else you'd never say that. If the parson sez to me, "Is your darter a vargin-maid?" d'ye think I shall say, "Oh no, parson"? I'll swear she is a vargin-maid on all the Bibles in all the churches in Wales.' That's jis' what I sez to Polly Onion, God forgi'e me. An' Poll sez, 'The parson'll be sure to send

you to hell, Meg, if you do that air.' An' I sez, 'So he may, then, but I *shall* do it, no fear.' That's what I sez to Poll Onion (she's downstairs at this werry moment a warmin' me a drop o' beer); it was 'er as showed you upstairs, cuss 'er for a fool; an' she can tell you the same thing as I'm a-tellin' on you."

"But what about her you kidnapped? Tell me all about it, or it will be worse for you."

"Ain't I a-tellin' you as fast as I can? Off to Carnarvon I goes, an' every futt o' the way I walks—Lor' bless your soul, there worn't a better pair o' pins nowheres than Meg Gudgeon's then, afore the water got in 'em and bust 'em; and I got to Llanbeblig churchyard early one mornin', an' there I seed the poor half-sharp gal. So you see I comed by her 'onest enough, p'leaceman, though she worn't ezzackly my own darter."

"Well, well," I said; "go on."

"Yes, it's all very well to say 'go on,' p'leaceman; but if you'd got as much water in your legs as I've got in mine, an' if you'd got no more wind in your bellows than I've got in mine, you'd find it none so easy to go on."

"What was she doing in the churchyard?"

"Well, p'leaceman, I'm tellin' you the truth, s'elp me Bob! I was a-lookin' over the graves to see if I could find a nice comfortable place for my pore gal, an' all at once I heered a kind o' sobbin' as would a' made me die o' fright if it 'adn't a' bin broad daylight, an' then I see a gal a-layin' flat on a grave an' cryin', an' when I got up to her I seed as she wur covered with mud, an' I seed as she wur a-starvin'."

"Good God, woman, you are lying! you are lying!"

"No, I ain't a-lyin'. She tookt to me the moment she clapped eyes on me; most people does, and them as don't ought, an' she got up an' put her arms round my neck, and she called me 'Knocker.'"

"Called you what?"

"Ain't I a-tellin' you? She called me 'Knocker'; and that's the very name as she allus called me up to the day of her death, pore dear! I tried to make 'er come along o' me, an' she wouldn't stir, an' so I left 'er, meanin' to go back; but when I got to my sister's by marriage, there was a letter for me and it wur from Polly Onion, a-sayin' as my pore Jenny died the same day as I left London, a-sayin',

'Mother, vi'lets, vi'lets; mother, vi'lets, vi'lets!' an' was buried by the parish. An' that upset me, p'leaceman, an' made me swoownd, an' when I comed to, I couldn't hear nothink only my pore Jenny's voice a-sobbin' on the wind, 'Mother, vi'lets, vi'lets; mother, vi'lets, vi'lets!' an that sent me off my 'ead a bit, and I ran out o' the house, an' there was Jenny's voice a-goin' on before me a-sobbin', 'Mother, vi'lets, vi'lets; mother, vi'lets, vi'lets!' an' it seemed to lead me back to the churchyard; an' lo! and be'old, there was the pore half-starved creatur' a-settin' there jist as I'd left 'er, an' I sez, 'God bless you, my gal, you're a-starvin'!' an' she jumped up, an' she comed an' throwed 'er arms round my waist, an' there we stood both on us a-cryin' togither, an' then I runned back into Carnarvon, an' fetched 'er some grub, an' she tucked into the grub.—But hullo! p'leaceman, what's up now? What the devil are you a-squeedgin' my 'and like that for? Are you a-goin' to kiss it? It ain't none so clean, p'leaceman. You're the rummest copper in plain clothes ever I seed in all my born days. Fust you seem as if you want to bite me, you looks so savage, an' then you looks as if you wants to kiss me; you'll make me laugh, I know you will, an' that'll make me cough. —Hi! Poll Onion, come 'ere. Bring my best lookin'-glass out o' my boudore, an' let me look at my old chops, for I'm blowed if there ain't a copper in plain clothes this time as is fell 'ead over ears in love with me, jist as the young swell did at the studero."

"Go on, Mrs. Gudgeon," I said; "go on. She ate the food?"

"Oh, didn't she jist! And the pore half-sharp thing took to me, an' I took to she, an' I thinks to myself, 'She's a purty gal, if she's ever so stupid, an' she'll get 'er livin' a-sellin' flowers o' fine days, and a-doin' the rainy-night dodge with baskets when it's wet'; and so I took 'er in, an' in the street she'd all of a suddent bust out a-singin' songs about Snowdon an' sich like, just as if she was a-singin' in a dream, and folk used to like to hear her an' gev her money; an' I was a good mother to 'er, I was, an' them as sez I worn't is cussed liars."

"And she never came to any harm?" I said, holding the great muscular hands between my two palms, unwilling to let them go. "She never came to any harm?"

"Ain't I said so more nor wunst? I swore on the Bible

—there's the very Bible, under the match-box, agin the winder—on that very Bible I swore as my pore Jenny brought from Wales, and as I've never popped yit—that this pore half-sharp gal should never go wrong through me; an' then, arter I swore that, my poor Jenny let me alone, an' I never 'eard 'er v'ice no more a-cryin', 'Mother, vi'lets, vi'lets; mother, vi'lets, vi'lets!' An' many's the chap as 'as come leerin' arter 'er as I've sent away with a flea in 'is ear. Cuss 'em all; they's all bad alike about purty gals, men is. She's never comed to no wrong through *me*. Didn't I ammost kill a real sailor capting when I used to live in the East End 'cause he tried to meddle with 'er? And worn't that the reason why I left my 'um close to Radcliffe Highway and comed here? Them as killed 'er wur the cussed lot in the studeros. I'm a dyin' woman; I'm as hinicent as a new-born babe. An' there ain't nothink o' 'ern in this room on'y a pair o' ole shoes an' a few rags in that ole trunk under the winder."

I went to the trunk and raised the lid. The tattered, stained remains of the very dress she wore when I last saw her in the mist on Snowdon! But what else? Pushed into an old worn shoe, which with its fellow lay tossed among the ragged clothes, was a brown stained letter. I took it out. It was addressed to "Miss Winifred Wynne at Mrs. Davies's." Part of the envelope was torn away. It bore the Graylingham post-mark, and its superscription was in a hand which I did not recognise, and yet it was a hand which seemed half-familiar to me. I opened it; I read a line or two before I fully realised what it was—the letter, full of childish prattle, which I had written to Winifred when I was a little boy—the letter which her aunt had forbidden her to answer.

I forgot where I was. I forgot that Sinfi was standing outside the door, till I heard the woman's voice exclaiming: "What do you want to set on my bed an' look at me like that for?—you ain't no p'leaceman in plain clothes, so none o' your larks. Git off o' my bed, will ye? You'll be a-settin' on my bad leg an' a-bustin' on it in a minit. Git off my bed, else look another way; them eyes o' yourn skear me."

I was sitting on the side of her bed and looking into her face. "Where did you get this?" I said, holding out the letter.

"You skears me, a-lookin' like that," said she. "I comed by it 'onest. One day when she was asleep, I was turnin' over her clothes to see how much longer they would hold together, when I feels a somethink 'ard sewed up in the breast; I rips it open, and it was that letter. I didn't put it back in the frock ag'in, 'cause I thought it might be useful some day in findin' out who she was. She never missed it. I don't think she'd 'ave missed anythink, she wur so on-common silly. You ain't a-goin' to pocket it, air you?"

I had put the letter in my pocket, and had seized the shoes and was going out of the room; but I stopped, took a sovereign from my purse, placed it in an envelope bearing my own address which I chanced to find in my pocket, and, putting it into her hand, I said, "Here is my address and here is a sovereign. I will tell your friend below to come for me or send whenever you need assistance." The woman clutched at the money with greed, and I left the room, signalling to Sinfi (who stood on the landing, pale and deeply moved) to follow me downstairs. When we reached the wretched room on the ground-floor we found the girl hanging some wet rags on lines that were stretched from wall to wall.

"What is your name?" I said.

"Polly Unwin," replied she, turning round with a piece of damp linen in her hand.

"And what are you?"

"What am I?"

"I mean what do you do for a living?"

"What do I do for a living?" she said. "All kinds of things—help the men at the barrows in the New Cut, sell flowers, do anything that comes in my way."

"Never mind what she does for a livin', brother," said Sinfi; "give her a gold balanser or two, and tell her to see arter the woman."

"Here is some money," I said to the girl. "See that Mrs. Gudgeon up-stairs wants for nothing. Is that story of hers true about her daughter and Llanbeblig churchyard?"

"That's true enough, though she's a wunner at a lie; that's true enough."

But as I spoke I heard a noise like the laugh or the shriek of a maniac. It seemed to come from upstairs.

"She's a-larfin' ag'in," said the girl. "It's a very wicked larf, sir, ain't it? But there's wuss 'uns nor Meg Gudgeon

for all 'er wicked larf, as I knows. Many a time she's kep' me from starvin'. I mus' run up an' see 'er. She'll kill herself a-larfin' yit."

The girl hurried up-stairs and I followed her, leaving Sinfi below. I re-entered the bed-room. There was the woman, her face buried in the pillow, rocking and rolling her body half round with the regularity of a pendulum. Between the peals of half-smothered hysterical laughter that came from her, I could hear her say:

"*Dear Lord Jesus, don't forget to love dear Henry who can't git up the gangways without me.*"

The words seemed to fall upon my heart like a rain of molten metal dropping from the merciless and mocking skies. But I had ceased to wonder at the cruelty of Fate. The girl went to her and shook her angrily. This seemed to allay her hysterics, for she rolled round upon her back and stared at us. Then she looked at the envelope clutched in her hand, and read out the address,

"Henry, Henry, Henry Halywin, Eskeuer! An' I tookt 'im for a copper in plain clothes all the while! Henry, Henry, Henry Halywin, Eskeuer! I shall die a-larfin', I know I shall! I shall die a-larfin', I know I shall! Poll! don't you mind me a-tellin' you about my pore darter Winifred—for my darter she *was*, as I'll swear afore all the beaks in London—don't you mind me a-sayin' that if she wouldn't talk when she wur awake, she could mag away fast enough when she wur asleep; an' it were allus the same mag about dear little Henry, an' dear Henry Halywin as couldn't git up the gangways without 'er. Well, pore dear Henry was 'er sweet'airt, an' this is the chap, an' if my eyes ain't stun blind, the werry chap out o' the cussed studeros as killed 'er, pore dear, an' as is a-skearin' me away from my beautiful 'um in Primrose Court; an' 'ere wur I a-talkin' to him all of a muck sweat, thinking he wur a copper in plain clothes!"

At this moment Sinfi entered the room. She came up to me, and laying her hand upon my shoulder she said: "Come away, brother, this is cruel hard for you to bear. It's our poor sister Winifred as is dead, and it ain't nobody else."

The effect of Sinfi's appearance and of her words upon the woman was like that of an electric shock. She sat up in her bed open-mouthed, staring from Sinfi to me, and from me to Sinfi.

"So my darter Winifred's your *sister* now, is she?" (turning to me). "A few minutes ago she was your sweet'airt: and now she seems to ha' bin your sister. And she was *your* sister, too, was she?" (turning to Sinfi). "Well, all I know is, that she was my darter, Winifred Gudgeon, as is dead, and buried in the New North Cemetery, pore dear; and yet she was sister to both on ye!"

She then buried her face again in the pillows and resumed the rocking movement, shrieking between her peals of laughter: "Well, if I'm the mother of a six-fut Gypsy gal and a black-eyed chap as seems jest atween a Gypsy and a Christian, I never knowed *that* afore. No, I never knowed *that* afore! I allus said I should die a-larfin', and so I shall; I'm a-dyin' now—ha! ha! ha!"

She fell back upon the pillow, exhausted by her own cruel merriment.

"She always said she'd die a-larfin', an' she will, too—more nor I shall ever do," said the girl.

"Did you notice what she said about Winnie a-callin' her Knocker?" said Sinfi.

"Yes, and couldn't understand it."

"*I* know what it meant. Winnie knowed all about the Knockers of Snowdon, the dwarfs o' the copper mine, and this woman, bein' so thick and short, must look ezackly like a Knocker, I should say, if you could see one."

I said to the girl, "Was she really kind to—to——"

"To her you were asking about,—the Essex Street Beauty? I should think she just was. She's a drinker, is poor Meg, and drinking in Primrose Court means starvation. Meg and the Beauty were often short enough of grub, but, drunk or sober, Meg would never touch a mouthful till the Beauty had had her fill. I noticed it many a time—not a mouthful. When Meg was obliged to send her into the streets to sell things she was always afraid that the Beauty might come to harm through the toffs and the chaps. The toffs were the worst looking after her—as they mostly are—so I was always watching her in the daytime, and at night Meg was always watching her, and that was what made me know your face, as soon as ever I clapt eyes on it."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Well, one rainy night when I was standing by the theatre door, I heard a toff ask a policeman about the Essex

Street Beauty, and I thought I knew what that meant very well. So I ran off to find Meg. I had seen her watching the Beauty all the time. But lo and behold! Meg was gone and the Beauty, too. So I run across here, and found Meg and the Beauty getting their supper as quiet as possible. Meg had heard the toff talking to the policeman—though I didn't know she was standing so near—and whisked her off and away as quick as lightning."

"That was I," I said. "God! God! If I had only known!"

"There's the same look now on your face as there was then, and I should know it among ten thousand."

"Polly Onion," I said, "there is my address, and if ever you want a friend, and if you are in trouble, you will know where to find assistance," and I gave her another sovereign.

"You're a good sort," said she, "and no mistake."

"Good-bye," I said, shaking her hand. "See well after Mrs. Gudgeon."

"All right," said she, and a smile broke over her face. "I think I ought to tell you now," she continued, "that Meg's no more ill of dropsy than I am; she could walk twenty miles off the reel; there ain't a bullock in England half as strong as Meg; she's shamming."

"Shamming, but why?"

"Well, she ain't drunk; ever since the Beauty died she's never touched a drop o' gin. But she's turned quite cranky. She's got it into her head that the relations of the Beauty are going to send her to prison for kidnapping; and she thinks that every one that comes near her is a policeman in plain clothes. She's just lying in bed to keep herself out of the way till she starts."

"Where's she going, then?"

"She talks about going to see after her son Bob in the country; her husband is a Welshman. He's over the water."

"Did you say she had given up drinking?" I asked.

"Yes; she seemed to dote on the Beauty, and when the Beauty died she said, 'My darter went wrong through me drinkin', and my son Bob went wrong through me drinkin'; and I feel somehow that it wos through my drinkin' that I lost the Beauty; and never will you find me touch another drop o' gin, Poll. Beer I ain't fond on, and it 'ud take a rare swill o' beer to get up as far as Meg Gudgeon's head.'"

"There ain't much fault to be found with a woman like Meg Gudgeon," said Sinfi. "Was the Beauty fond o' her? She ought to ha' bin."

"She used to call her Knocker," said the girl. "She seemed very fond of her when they were together, but seemed to forget her as soon as they were apart."

Sinfi and I then left the house.

In Great Queen Street she took my hand as if to bid me good-bye. But she stood and gazed at me wistfully, and I gazed at her. At last she said:

"An' now, brother, we'll jist go across to Kingston Vale, an' see my daddy, an' set your livin'-waggin to rights."

"Then, Sinfi," said I, "you and I are one more——"

I stopped and looked at her. The fearless young Amazon and seeress, who kept a large family of Kaulo Camloes in awe, was supposed to have conquered the feminine weakness of tears; but she had not. There was a chink in the Amazon's armour, and I had found it.

"Yis," said she, nodding her head and smiling. "You an' me's right pals ag'in."

As we were going I told her how I had replaced the jewel in the tomb.

"I know'd you would do it. Yis, I heerd you telling the gravedigger the same thing."

"And yet," said I, bitterly, "in spite of that and in spite of the Golden Hand, she is dead."

Sinfi stood silently looking at me now. Even her prodigious faith seemed conquered.

## IV.

For a few days I paced with Sinfi over Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park. The weather was now unusually brilliant for the time of year. Sinfi would walk silently by my side.

But I could not rest with the Gypsies. I must be alone. Soon I left the camp and returned to London, where I took a suite of rooms in a house not far from Eaton Square—though to me London was a huge meaningless maze of houses clustered around Primrose Court—that horrid,

fascinating, intolerable core of pain. Into my lungs poured the hateful atmosphere of the city where Winifred had perished; poured hot and stifling as sand-blasts of the desert. Impossible to stay there!—for the pavement seemed actually to scorch my feet, like the floor of a fiery furnace. To me the sun above was but the hideous eye of Circumstance which had stared down pitilessly on that bare head of hers, and blistered those feet.

The lamps at night seemed twinkling, blinking in a callous consciousness of my tragedy—my monstrous tragedy of real life, the like of which no poet dare imagine. But what aroused my wrath to an unbearable pitch—what determined me to leave London at once—was the sight of the unsympathetic faces in the streets. Though sympathy could have given me no comfort, the myriad unsympathetic eyes of London infuriated me.

"Died in beggar's rags—died in a hovel!" I muttered with rage as the equipages and coarse splendours of the West End rolled insolently by. "Died in a hovel!—and this London, this vast, ridiculous, swarming human ant-hill, whose millions of paltry humdrum lives were not worth one breath from those lips—this London spurned her, left her to perish alone in her squalor and misery."

Cyri and Wilderspin had returned to the Continent. D'Arcy was still away.

I made application to the Home Secretary to have the pauper grave opened. On the ground that I was "not a relative of the deceased," the officials refused to institute even preliminary inquiries.

During this time no news of Mrs. Gudgeon had come to me through Polly Onion, and I determined to go to Primrose Court and see what had become of her.

When I reached Primrose Court I found that the shutters of the house were up. Knocking and getting no response, I ascertained from a pot-boy who was passing the corner of the court that Mrs. Gudgeon had decamped. Neither the pot-boy nor any one in the court could tell me whither she was gone.

"But where is Polly Onion?" I asked anxiously; for I was beginning to blame myself bitterly for having neglected them.

"I can tell you where poor Polly is," said the pot-boy. "She's in the New North Cemetery. She fell down stairs and broke her neck."

"Why, she lived down-stairs," I said.

"That's true; you seem to be well up in the family, sir. But Poll couldn't pay her rent, so old Meg took her in. And on the very morning when Meg and Poll were a-startin' off together into the country—it was quite early and dark—Poll stumbles over three young flower gals as 'ad crep' in the front door in the night time and was makin' the stairs their bed. Gals as hadn't made enough to pay for their night's lodging often used to sleep on Meg's stairs. Poll was picked up as nigh dead as a toucher, and she died at the 'ospital."

Toiling in the revolving cage of Circumstance, I strove in vain against that most appalling form of envy—the envy of one's fellow-creatures that they should live and breathe while there is no breath of life for the *one*.

My uncle Cecil's death had made me a rich man; but what was wealth to me if it could not buy me respite from the vision haunting me day and night—the vision of the attic, the mattress, and the woman?

And as I thought of the powerlessness of wealth to give me one crumb of comfort, and remembered Winnie's sermon about wealth, I would look at myself in the mirror above my mantelpiece and smile bitterly at the sight of the hollow cheeks, furrowed brow, and melancholy eyes, and recall her words about her hovering near me after she was dead.

The thought of my wealth and the squalor in which she had died was, I think, the most maddening thought of all. I had now become possessor of Wilderspin's picture, *Faith and Love*, having bought it of the Broad Street dealer to whom it belonged; and also of the *Christabel* picture, and these I was constantly looking at as they hung up on the walls of my room. After a while, however, I destroyed the *Christabel* picture, it was too painful. Though I would not see such friends as I had, I read their letters; indeed, it was these same letters which alone could draw from me a grim smile now and then.

Almost every letter ended by urging me, in order to flee from my sorrows, to travel! With the typical John Bull

travelling seems to be always the panacea. In sorrow, John's herald of peace is Baedeker: the dispenser of John's true nepenthe is Mr. Murray. Pity and love for Winifred pursued me, tortured me nigh unto death, and therefore did these friends of mine seem to suppose that I wanted to flee from my pity and sorrow! Why, to flee from my sorrow, to get free of my pity, to flee from the agonies that went nigh to tearing soul from body, would have been to flee from all that I had left of life—memory.

Did I want to flee from Winnie? Why, memory was Winnie now; and did I want to flee from *her*? And yet it was memory that was goading me on to the verge of madness. No doubt the reader thinks me a weak creature for allowing the passion of pity to sap my manhood in this fashion. But it was not so much her death as the manner of her death that withered my heart and darkened my soul. The calamities which fell upon her, grievous beyond measure, unparalleled, not to be thought of save with a pallor of cheek and a shudder of the flesh, were ever before me, mocking me—maddening me.

"Died in a hovel!" As I gave voice to this impeachment of Heaven, night after night, wandering up and down the streets, my brain was being scorched and withered by those same thoughts of anger against destiny and most awful revolt which had appalled me when first I saw how the curse of Heaven or the whim of Circumstance had been fulfilled.

Then came that passionate yearning for death, which grief such as mine must needs bring. But if what Materialism teaches were true, suicide would rob me even of my memory of her. If, on the other hand, what I had been taught by the supernaturalism of my ancestors were true, to commit suicide might be but to play finally into the hands of that same unknown pitiless power with whom my love had all along been striving.

"Suicide might sever my soul from hers for ever," I said, and then the tragedy would seem too monstrously unjust to be true, and I said: "It cannot be—such things cannot be; it is a hideous dream. She is not dead! She is in Wales with friends at Carnarvon, and I shall awake and laugh at all this imaginary woe!'

And what were now my feelings towards the memory of my father? Can a man cherish in his heart at one and the

same moment scorn of another man for believing in the efficacy of a curse, and bitter anger against him for having left a curse behind him? He can! On my return to London after my illness I had sent back to Wilderspin the copy of *The Veiled Queen* he had lent me. But from the library of Raxton Hall I brought my father's own copy, elaborately bound in the tooled black calf my father affected. The very sight of that black binding now irritated me; never did I pass it without experiencing a sensation that seemed a blending of scorn and fear: scorn of the ancestral superstitions the book gave voice to: fear of them.

One day I took the book from the shelves and then hurled it across the room. Stumbling over it some days after this, a spasm of ungovernable rage came upon me, for terribly was my blood struggling with Fenella Stanley and Philip Aylwin, and thousands of ancestors, Romany and Gorgio, who for ages upon ages had been shaping my destiny. I began to tear out the leaves and throw them on the fire. But suddenly I perceived the leaves to be covered with marginalia in my father's manuscript, and with references to Fenella Stanley's letters—letters which my father seemed to have studied as deeply as though they were the writings of a great philosopher instead of the scribblings of an ignorant Gypsy. My eye had caught certain written words which caused me to clutch at the sheets still burning on the fire. Too late!—I grasped nothing save a little paper-ash. Then I turned to the pages still left in my hand, and read these words of my father's:

"These marginalia are written for the eyes of my dear son, into whose hands this copy of my book will come. Until he gave me his promise to bury the amulet with me, I felt alone in the world. But even he failed to understand what he called my 'superstition.' He did not know that by perpetually feeling on my bosom the facets of the beloved jewel which had long lain warm upon hers—the cross which had received the last kiss from her lips—I had been able to focus all the scattered rays of thought—I had been able to vitalize memory till it became an actual presence. He did not know that out of my sorrow had been born at last a strange kind of happiness—the happiness that springs from loving a memory—living with a memory till it becomes a presence—an objective reality. He did not know that, by holding her continually in my thoughts, by means of the amulet, I achieved at last the miracle described by the Hindoo poets—the miracle of reshaping from the

undulations of 'the three regions of the universe the remembered object by the all-creative magic of love!' "

Then followed some translations from the Kumârasambhava and other Sanscrit poems, and then the well-known passage in Lucretius about dreams, and then a pathetic account of the visions called up within him by the sensation caused by the lacerations of the facets of the cherished amulet upon his bosom—visions something akin, as I imagine, to those experienced by *convulsionnaires*. And then after all this learning came references to poor ignorant Fenella Stanley's letters and extracts from them.

In one of these extracts I was startled to come upon the now familiar word crwth.

"De Welch fok ses as de livin' mullos only follow the crwth on Snowden wen it is playde by a Welch Chavi, but dat is all a lie. Dey follows the crwth when a Romany Chi plays it, as I nos very wel, but de Chavi wot play on the crwth, shee must love the living mullo she want for to come, and de living mullo must love her."

And then followed my father's comments on the extract.

"N. B.—To see and hear a crwth, if possible, and ascertain the true nature of the vibrations. But there are said to be only a few crwths in existence; and very likely there is no musician who can play upon them."

Then followed a few sentences written at a later date.

"The crwth is now becoming obsolete; on inquiry I learn that it is a stringed instrument played with a bow like a violin; but as one of the feet of the bridge passes through one of the sound-holes and rests on the inside of the back, the vibrations must be quite unique, if we remember how important a part is played by the back in all instruments of the violin kind. It must be far more subtle than the vibrations of the Welsh harp, and even more subtle (if also more nasal) than those of the violin.

"The reason why music has in all ages been called in to aid in evoking the spirits, the reason why it is as potent now as ever it was in aiding the spirits to manifest themselves, is simple enough: the rhythmic vibrations of music set in active motion the magnetic waves through whose means alone the two worlds, spiritual and material, can hold communication. The quality and the value of these vibrations depends mainly, no doubt, upon the magnetic power, conscious or other, of the musician, but partly also upon the kind of instrument used. The vibrations awakened by stringed instruments have been long known to be more subtle than any others; instruments of the violin kind are of course the most subtle of all. Doubtless this is why among the Welsh hills the old saying used to be, 'The spirits follow the crwth.' "

"Which folly is the more besotted," I said as I read and re-read the marginalia—"that of the scholar with his scientific nonsense about vibrations, or that of the ignorant Gypsy with her livin' mullos drawn through the air by music and love?"

But from this moment my mind began to run upon the picture of Fenella Stanley, surrounded by those Snowdonian spirits which her music was supposed to have evoked from the mountain air of the morning.

# XIII.

# The Magic of Snowdon

# XIII.—THE MAGIC OF SNOWDON

## I.

In a few days I left London and went to North Wales.

Opposite to me in the railway carriage sat an elderly lady, into whose face I occasionally felt myself to be staring in an unconscious way. But I was merely communing with myself; I was saying to myself, "My love of North Wales, and especially of Snowdon, is certainly very strong; but it is easily accounted for—it is a matter of temperament. Even had Wales not been associated with Winnie, I still must have dearly loved it. Much has been said about the effect of scenery upon the minds and temperament of those who are native to it. But temperament is a matter of ancestral conditions: the place of one's birth is an accident. As some, like my cousin Percy, for instance, are born with a passion for the sea, so some people are born with a passion for forests, some with a passion for mountains, and some with a passion for rolling plains. The landscape amid which I was born had, no doubt, a charm for me, and could bring to me that nature-ecstasy which I inherited from Fenella Stanley. But with Wales I actually fell in love the moment I set foot in the country. This is why I am hurrying there now."

And then I laughed at myself, and evidently frightened the old lady very much. She did not know that underneath the soul's direst struggle—the struggle of personality with the tyranny of the ancestral blood—there is an awful sense of humour—a laughter (unconquerable, and yet intolerable) at the deepest of all incongruities, the incongruity of Fate's game with man. I apologised to her, and told her that I had been absorbed in reading a droll story,

in which a man believed that the Angel of Memory had re-fashioned for him his dead wife out of his own sorrow and unquenchable fountain of tears.

"'What an extraordinary idea!" said the old lady, in the conciliatory tone she would have adopted towards a madman whom she found alone with her in a railway carriage. "I mean he was very eccentric, wasn't he?"

"Who shall say, madam? 'Bold is the donkey-driver and bold the ka'dee who dares say what he will believe, what disbelieve, not knowing in any wise the mind of Allah, not knowing in any wise his own heart and what it shall some day suffer.'"

At the next station the old lady left the carriage and entered another, and I was left alone.

My intention was to take up my residence at the cottage where Winifred had lived with her aunt. Indeed, for a few days I did this, taking with me one of the Welsh peasants with whom I had previously made friends. But of course a lengthened stay in such a house was impossible. More than ever now I needed attendance, and good attendance, for I had passed into a strange state of irritability—I had no command over my nerves, which were jarred by the most trifling thing. I went to the hotel at Pen y Gwryd, but there tourists and visitors made life more intolerable still to a man in my condition.

At first I thought of building a house as near to the cottage as possible; but this would take time, and I could not rest out of Wales. I decided at last to have a wooden bungalow built. By telling the builders that time was the first consideration with me, the cost a secondary one, I got a bungalow built in a few weeks. By the tradesmen of Chester I got it fitted up and furnished to my taste with equal rapidity. Attending to this business gave real relief.

When the bungalow was finished I removed into it the picture "Faith and Love." I also got in as much painting material as I might want and began to make sketches in the neighbourhood.

Time went on, and there I remained. In a great degree, however, the habit of grieving was conquered by my application to work. My moroseness of temper gradually left me.

Beautiful memories began to take the place of hideous ones—the picture of the mattress and the squalor gave

place to pictures of Winifred on the sands of Raxton or on Snowdon. Yet so much of habit is there in grief that even at this time I was subject to recurrent waves of the old pain—waves which were sometimes as overmastering as ever.

I did not neglect the cottage, which was now my property, but kept it in exactly the same state as that in which it had been put by Sinfi after Winnie had wandered back to Wales.

By isolating myself from all society, by surrounding myself with mementoes of Winifred, memory really did at last seem to be working a miracle such as was worked for the widowed Ja'afar.

Yet not entirely had memory passed into an objective presence. I seemed to feel Winnie near me; but that was all. I felt that more necessary than anything else in perfecting the atmosphere of memory in which I would live was the society of her in whom alone I had found sympathy —Sinfi Lovell. Did I also remember the wild theories of my father and Fenella Stanley about the crwth? To obtain the company of Sinfi had now become very difficult—her attitude towards me had so changed. When she allowed me to rejoin the Lovells at Kingston Vale she did so under the compulsion of my distress. But my leaving the Gypsies of my own accord left her free from this compulsion. She felt that she had now at last bidden me farewell for ever.

Still, opportunities of seeing her occasionally would, I knew, present themselves, and I now determined to avail myself of these. Panuel Lovell and some of the Boswells were not unfrequently in the neighbourhood, and they were always accompanied by Sinfi and Videy.

## II.

On a certain occasion, when I learnt that the Lovells were in the neighbourhood, I sought them out. Sinfi at first was extremely shy, or distant, or proud, or scared, and it was not till after one or two interviews that she relaxed. She still was overshadowed by some mysterious feeling towards

me that seemed at one moment anger, at another dread. However, I succeeded at last. I persuaded Panuel and his daughters to leave their friends at "the Place," and spend a few days with me at the bungalow. Great was the gaping and wide the grinning among the tourists to see me marching along the Capel Curig road with three Gypsies. But to all human opinion I had become as indifferent as Wilderspin himself.

As we walked along the road, Sinfi slowly warmed into her old self, but Videy, as usual, was silent, preoccupied, and meditative. When we got within sight of the bungalow, however, the lights flashing from the windows made the long low building look very imposing. Pharaoh, the bantam cock which Sinfi was carrying began to crow, but silence again fell upon Sinfi.

Panuel, when we entered the bungalow, said he was very tired and would like to go to bed. I had perceived by the glossy appearance of his skin (which was of the colour of beeswaxed mahogany) and the benevolent dimple in his cheek that, although far from being intoxicated, he was "market-merry"; and as the two sisters also seemed tired, I took the party at once to their bedrooms.

"Dordi! what a gran' room," said Sinfi in a hushed voice, as I opened the door of the one allotted to her. "Don't you mind, Videy, when you an' me fust slep' like two kairengros?"*

"No, I don't," said Videy sharply.

"It was at Llangollen Fair," continued Sinfi, her frank face beaming like a great child's; "two little chavies we was then. An' don't you mind, Videy, how we both on us cried when they put us to bed, 'cause we was afeard the ceilin' would fall down on us?"

Videy made no answer, but tossed up her head and looked around to see whether there was a grinning servant within earshot.

"Good night, Sinfi," I said, shaking her hand; "and now, Videy, I will show you your room."

"Oh, but Videy an' me sleeps togither, don't we?"

"Certainly, if you wish it," I replied.

"She's afeard o' the 'mullos'," said Videy, scornfully, as she went and stood before an old engraved Venetian mirror I had picked up at Chester, admiring her own perfect

*House-dwellers.

little figure reflected therein. "Ever since she's know'd you she's bin afeard o' mullos, and keeps Pharaoh with her o' nights; the mullos never come where there's a crowin' cock."

I did not look at Sinfi, but bent my eyes upon the mirror, where, several inches above the reflex of Videy's sarcastic face, shone the features of Sinfi, perfectly cut as those of a Greek statue.

"It's the dukkerin' dook* as she's afeard on," said Videy, smiling in the glass till her face seemed one wicked glitter of scarlet lips and pearly teeth. "An' yit there ain't no dukkerin' dook, an' there ain't no mullos."

Among the elaborately-engraved flowers and stars at the top of the mirror was the representation of an angel grasping a musical instrument.

"Look, look!" said Sinfi, "I never know'd afore that angels played the crwth. I wonder whether they can draw a livin' mullo up to the clouds, same as my crwth can draw one to Snowdon?"

I bade them good-night, and joined Panuel at the door.

I was conducting him along the corridor to his room when the door was re-opened and Sinfi's head appeared, as bright as ever, and then a beckoning hand.

"Reia," said she, when I had returned to the door, "I want to whisper a word in your ear"; and she pulled my head towards the door and whispered, "Don't tell nobody about that 'ere jewelled trúshul in the church vaults at Raxton. We shall be going down there at the fair time, so don't tell nobody."

"But you surely are not afraid of your father," I whispered in reply.

"No, no," said she, bringing her lips so close to my face that I felt the breath steaming round my ear. "Not daddy —Videy!—Daddy can't keep a secret for five minutes. It's her I'm afeared on."

I had scarcely left the door two yards behind me when I heard the voices of the sisters in loud altercation. I heard Sinfi exclaim, "I sha'n't tell you what I said to him, so now! It was somethin' atween him an' me."

"There they are ag'in," said Panuel, bending his head sagely round and pointing with his thumb over his shoulder to the door; "at it ag'in! Them two chavies o' mine are

*The prophesying ghost.

allus a-quarrellin' now, an' it's allus about the same thing. 'Tain't the quarrellin' as I mind so much,—women an' sparrows, they say, must cherrup an' quarrel,—but they needn't allus keep a-nag-naggin' about the same thing."

"What's their subject, Panuel?" I asked.

"Subjick? Why *you*, in course. That's what the subjick is. When women quarrels you may allus be sure there's a chap somewheres about."

By this time we had entered his bedroom: he went and sat upon the bed, and without looking round him began unlacing his "highlows." I had often on previous occasions remarked that Panuel, who, when sober, was as silent as Videy, and looked like her in the face, became, the moment that he passed into "market-merriness," as frank and communicative as Sinfi, and (what was more inexplicable) *looked* as much like Sinfi as he had previously looked like Videy.

"How can I be the subject of their quarrels?" I said listlessly enough, for I scarcely at first followed his words.

"How? Ain't you a chap?"

"Undoubtedly, Panuel, I am a chap."

"When women quarrels there's allus a chap somewheres about, in course there is. But look ye here, Mr. Aylwin, the fault ain't Sinfi's, not a bit of it. It's Videy's, wi' her dog-in-the-manger ways. She's a back-bred 'un," he said, giving me a knowing wink as he pulled off his calf-skin waistcoat and tossed it on to a chair at the further end of the room with a certainty of aim that would have been marvellous, even had he been entirely free from market-merriness.

I had before observed that Panuel when market-merry always designated Videy the "back-bred 'un, that took a'ter Shuri's blazin' old dad!" when sober his views of heredity changed; the "back-bred 'un" was Sinfi.

After breakfast next morning it was agreed that Panuel and Videy should walk to the Place to see that everything was going on well, while Sinfi and I should remain in the bungalow. I observed from the distance that Videy had loitered behind her father on the Capel Curig road. I saw a dark shadow of anger pass over Sinfi's face, and I soon understood what was causing it. The daughter of the well-to-do Panuel Lovell and my guest was accosting a tourist with, "Let me tell you your fortune, my pretty gen-

tleman. Give the poor Gypsy a sixpence for luck, my gentleman."

The bungalow delighted Sinfi. "It's just like a great livin'-waggin, only more comfortable," said she.

We spent the entire morning and afternoon there, and much of the next two days. It certainly seemed to me that her mere presence was an immense stimulus to memory in vitalising its one image.

"What's the use o' us a-keepin' a-talkin' about Winnie?" Sinfi said to me one day. "It on'y makes you fret. You skears me sometimes; for your eyes are a-gettin' jis' as sad-lookin' as Mr. D'Arcy's eyes, an' it's all along o' frettin'."

I persuaded her to stay with me while Panuel and Videy went on to Chester, for she could both soothe and amuse me.

## III.

Those who might suppose that Sinfi Lovell's lack of education would be a barrier against our sympathy, know little or nothing of real sorrow—little or nothing of the human heart—little or nothing of the stricken soul that looks out on man and his convention through the light of an intolerable pain.

I now began to read and study as well as paint. But so absorbed was I in my struggle with Fenella Stanley and Romany superstitions, that the only subject which could distract me from memory was that of hereditary influence —prepotency of transmission in relation to races. Though Sinfi could neither read nor write, she loved to sit by my side and, caressing Pharaoh, to watch me as I read or wrote. To her there evidently seemed something mysterious and uncanny in writing, something like "penning dukkering." It seemed to her, I think, a much more remarkable accomplishment than that of painting. And as to reading, I am not sure that the satirical Videy was entirely wrong in saying that Sinfi believed that books "could talk jis' like men and women." Not a word would she speak, save when she now and then bent down her head to whisper to Pharaoh when that little warrior was inclined to

give a disturbing chuckle, or to shake his wattles. And when at last she and Pharaoh got wearied by the prolonged silence, she would begin to murmur in a tone of playful satire to the restless bird, "Mum, mum, Pharaoh. He's too boot of a much to rocker a choori chavi." [Hush, hush, Pharaoh. He's too proud to speak to a poor child.]

Of course there was immense curiosity about my life at the bungalow, not only among the visitors at the Capel Curig Hotel, but among the Welsh residents; and rarely did the weekly papers come out without some paragraph about me. As a result of this, some of the London papers reproduced the paragraphs, and built upon their gossip columns of a positively offensive nature. In a paper which I will for convenience call the *London Satirist* appeared a paragraph which some one cut out of the columns of the paper and posted to me. It ran thus:

"The Eccentric Aylwins.—The power of heredity, which has much exercised the mind of Balzac, has never been more strikingly exemplified than in the case of the great family of the Aylwins. It is matter of common knowledge that some generations ago one of the Aylwins married a Gypsy. This fact did not, however, prevent his branch from being respectable, and receiving the name of the proud Aylwins; and the Gypsy blood remained entirely in abeyance until the present generation. Mr. Percy Aylwin, it will be remembered, having been smitten by the charms of a certain Rhona Boswell, actually set up a tent with the Gypsies; and now Mr. Henry Aylwin, of Raxton Hall (who, by the bye, has never been seen in that neighbourhood since the great landslip), is said to be following a good example by living in Wales with a Gypsy wife, but whether the wedding took place at St. George's, Hanover Square, or in simpler fashion in an encampment of Little Egypt we do not know."

One day in the bungalow, when I was reading the copious marginalia with which my father had furnished his own copy of *The Veiled Queen*, I came upon a passage which so completely carried my mind back to the night of our betrothal that I heard as plainly as I had then heard Winnie's words at the door of her father's cottage:

"I should have to come in the winds and play around you in the woods. I should have to peep over the clouds and watch you. I should have to follow you about wherever you went. I should have to beset you till you said: 'Bother Winnie! I wish she'd keep in heaven!'"

The written words of my father that had worked this magical effect upon me were these:

"But after months of these lonely wanderings in Graylingham Wood and along the sands, not even the reshaping power of memory would suffice to appease my longing; a new hope, wild as new, was breaking in upon my soul, dim and yet golden, like the sun struggling through a sea-fog. While wandering with me along the sands on the eve of that dreadful day when I lost her, she had declared that even in heaven she could not rest without me, nor did I understand how she could. For by this time my instincts had fully taught me that there is a kind of love so intense that no power in the universe—not death itself—is strong enough to sever it from its object. I knew that although true spiritual love, as thus understood, scarcely exists among Englishmen, and even among Englishwomen is so rare that the capacity for feeling it is a kind of genius, this genius was hers. Sooner or later I said to myself, 'She will and must manifest herself!'"

I looked up from the book and saw both Sinfi and Pharaoh gazing at me.

"Sinfi," I said, "what were Winnie's favourite places among the hills? Where was she most in the habit of roaming when she stayed with your people?"

"If I ain't told you that often enough it's a pity, brother," she said. "What do *you* think, Pharaoh?"

Pharoah expressed his acquiescence in the satire by clapping his wings and crowing at me contemptuously.

"The place I think she liked most of all wur that very pool where she and you breakfasted together on that morning."

"Were there no other favourite places?"

"Yes, there wur the Fairy Glen; she wur very fond of that. And there wur the Swallow Falls; she wur very fond of them. And there wur a place on the Beddgelert pathway, up from the Carnarvon road, about two miles from Beddgelert. There is a great bit of rock there where she used to love to sit and look across towards Anglesey. And talking about that place reminds me, brother, that our people and the Boswells and a lot more are camped on the Carnarvon road just where the pathway up Snowdon begins. And I wur told yesterday by a 'quaintance of mine as I seed outside the bungalow that daddy and Videy had joined them. Shouldn't we go and see 'em?"

This exactly fitted in with the thoughts and projects that had suddenly come to me, and it was arranged that we should start for the encampment next morning.

As we were leaving the bungalow the next day, I said to Sinfi, "You are not taking your crwth."

"Crwth! we sha'n't want that."

"Your people are very fond of music, you know. Your father is very fond of a musical tea."

"So he is. I'll take it," said Sinfi.

## IV.

When we reached the camping place on the Carnarvon road we found a very jolly party. Panuel had had some very successful dealings, and he was slightly market-merry. He said to Videy, "Make the tea, Vi, and let Sinfi hev' hern fust, so that she can play on the Welsh fiddle while the rest on us are gettin' ourn. It'll seem jist like Chester Fair with Jim Burton scrapin' in the dancin' booth to heel and toe."

Sinfi soon finished her tea, and began to play some merry dancing airs, which set Rhona Boswell's limbs twittering till she spilt her tea in her lap. Then, laughing at the catastrophe, she sprang up saying, "I'll dance myself dry," and began dancing on the sward.

After tea was over the party got too boisterous for Sinfi's taste and she said to me, "Let's slip away, brother, and go up the pathway, and I'll show you Winnie's favourite place."

This proposal met my wishes entirely, and under the pretence of going to look at something on the Carnarvon road we managed to escape from the party, Sinfi still carrying her crwth and bow. She then led the way up a slope green with grass and moss. We did not talk till we had passed the slate quarry.

The evening was so fine and the scene was so lovely that Sinfi's very body seemed to drink it in and become intoxicated with beauty. After we had left the slate quarries behind, the panorama became more entrancing at every yard we walked. Cwellyn Lake and Valley, Moel Hebog, y Garnedd, the glittering sea, Anglesey, Holyhead Hill, all seemed to be growing in gold and glory out of masses of sunset mist.

When at last we reached the edge of a steep cliff, with the rocky forehead of Snowdon in front, and the shining llyns of Cwm y Clogwyn below, Sinfi stopped.

"This is the place," said she, sitting down on a mossy mound, "where Winnie loved to come and look down."

After Sinfi and I had sat on this mound for a few minutes, I asked her to sing and play one or two Welsh airs which I knew to be especial favourites of hers, and then, with much hesitancy, I asked her to play and sing the same song or incantation which had become associated for ever with my first morning on the hills.

"You mean the Welsh dukkerin' gillie," said Sinfi, looking, with an expression that might have been either alarm or suspicion, into my face.

"Yes."

"You've been a-thinkin' all this while, brother, that I don't know why you asked me about Winnie's favourite places on Snowdon, and why you wanted me to take my crwth to the camp. But I've been a-thinkin' about it, and I know now why you did, and I know why you wants me to play the Welsh dukkerin' gillie here. It's because you heerd me say that if I were to play that dukkerin' gillie on Snowdon in the places she was fond on, I could tell for sartin whether Winnie wur alive or dead. If she wur alive her livin' mullo 'ud follow the crwth. But I ain't a-goin' to do it."

"Why not, Sinfi?"

"Because my mammy used to say it ain't right to make use o' the real dukkerin' for Gorgios, and I've heerd her say that if them as had the real dukkerin'—the dukkerin' for the Romanies—used it for the Gorgios, or if they turned it into a sport and a plaything, it 'ud leave 'em altogether. And that ain't the wust on it, for when the real dukkerin' leaves you it turns into a kind of a cuss, and it brings on the bite of the Romany Sap.* Even now, Hal, I sometimes o' nights feels the bite here of the Romany Sap," pointing to her bosom, "and it's all along o' you, Hal, it's all along o' you, because I seem to be breaking the promise about Gorgios I made to my poor mammy."

"The Romany Sap? You mean the Romany conscience, I suppose, Sinfi; you mean the trouble a Romany feels when he has broken the Romany laws, when he has done

*The Romany serpent, Conscience.

wrong according to the Romany notions of right and wrong. But you are innocent of all wrong-doing."

"I don't know nothin' about conscience," said she. "I mean the Romany Sap. Don't you mind when we was a-goin' up Snowdon arter Winifred that mornin'? I told you as the rocks, an' the trees, an' the winds, an' the waters, cuss us when we goes ag'in the Romany blood an' ag'in the dukkerin' dook. The cuss that the rocks, an' the trees, an' the winds, an' the waters makes, an' sends it out to bite the burk* o' the Romany as does wrong—that's the Romany Sap."

"You mean conscience, Sinfi."

"No, I don't mean nothink o' the sort; the Romanies ain't got no conscience, an' if the Gorgios has, it's precious little good as it does 'em, as far as I can see. But the Romanies has got the Romany Sap. Everything wrong as you does, such as killin' a Romany, or cheatin' a Romany, or playin' the lubbany with a Gorgio, or breakin' your oath to your mammy as is dead, or goin' ag'in the dukderin' dook, an' sich like, every one o' these things turns into the Romany Sap."

"You're speaking of conscience, Sinfi."

"Every one o' them wrong things as you does seems to make out o' the burk o' the airth a sap o' its own as has got its own pertickler stare, but allus it's a hungry sap, Hal, an' a sap wi' bloody fangs. An' it's a sap as follows the bad un's feet, Hal—follows the bad un's feet wheresomever they goes; it's a sap as goes slippin' thro' the dews o' the grass on the brightest mornin', and dodges round the trees in the sweetest evenin', an' goes wriggle, wriggle across the brook jis' when you wants to enjoy yourself, jis' when you wants to stay a bit on the steppin' stuns to enjoy the sight o' the dear little minnows a-shootin' atween the water-creases. That's what the Romany Sap is."

"Don't talk like that, Sinfi," I said; "you make me feel the sap myself."

"It's a sap, Hal, as follows you everywhere, everywhere, till you feel as you must stop an' face it whatever comes; an' stop you do at last, an' turn round you must, an' bare your burk you must to the sharp teeth o' that air wenemous sap."

*Breast.

"Well, and what then, Sinfi?"

"Well then, when you ha' given up to the thing its fill o' your blood, then the trees, an' the rocks, an' the winds, an' the waters seem to know, for everythink seems to begin smilin' ag'in, an' you're let to go on your way till you do somethin' bad ag'in. That's the Romany Sap, Hal, an' I won't deny as I sometimes feel its bite pretty hard here (pointing to her breast) when I thinks what I promised my poor mammy, an' how I kep' my word to her, when I let a Gorgio come under our tents."*

"You don't mean," I said, "that it is a real flesh-and-blood sap, but a sap that you think you see and feel."

"Hal," said Sinfi, "a Romany's feelin's ain't like a Gorgio's. A Romany can feel the bite of a sap whether it's made o' flesh an' blood or not, and the Romany Sap's all the wuss for not bein' a flesh-and-blood sap, for it's a cuss hatched in the airth; it's everythink a-cussin' on ye—the airth, an' the sky, an' the dukkerin' dook."

Her manner was so solemn, her grand simplicity was so pathetic, that I felt I could not urge her to do what her conscience told her was wrong. But soon that which no persuasion of mine would have effected the grief and disappointment expressed by my face achieved.

"Hal," she said, "I sometimes feel as if I'd bear the bite o' all the Romany saps as ever wur hatched to give you a little comfort. Besides, it's for a true Romany arter all—it's for myself quite as much as for you that I'm a-goin' to see whether Winnie is alive or dead. If she's dead we sha'n't see nothink, and perhaps if she's in one o' them fits o' hern we sha'n't see nothink; but if she's alive and herself ag'in, I believe I shall see—p'raps we shall both see —her livin' mullo."

She then drew the bow across the crwth. The instrument at first seemed to chatter with her agitation. I waited in breathless suspense. At last there came clearly from her crwth the wild air I had already heard on Snowdon. Then the sound of the instrument ceased save for the drone of the two bottom strings, and Sinfi's voice leapt

*To prevent misconceptions, it may be well to say that the paraphrase of Sinfi's description of the "Romany Sap," which appeared in the writer's reminiscences of George Borrow, was written long after the main portion of the present narrative.

out and I heard the words of what she called the Welsh dukkering gillie.

As I listened and looked over the wide-stretching panorama before me, I felt my very flesh answering to every vibration; and when the song stopped and I suddenly heard Sinfi call out, "Look, brother!" I felt that my own being, physical and mental, had passed into a new phase, and that resistance to some mighty power governing my blood was impossible.

"Look straight afore you, brother, and you'll see Winnie's face. She's alive, brother, and the dukkeripen of the Golden Hand will come true, and mine will come true. Oh, mammy, mammy!"

At first I saw nothing, but after awhile two blue eyes seemed gazing at me as through a veil of evening haze. They were looking straight at me, those beloved eyes—they were sparkling with childish happiness as they had sparkled through the vapours of the pool when she walked towards me that morning on the brink of Knockers' Llyn.

Starting up and throwing up my arms, I cried, "My darling!" The vision vanished. Then turning round, I looked at Sinfi. She seemed listening to a voice I could not hear—her face was pale with emotion. I could hear her breath coming and going heavily; her bosom rose and fell, and the necklace of coral and gold coins around her throat trembled like a shuddering snake while she murmured, "My dukkeripen! Yes, mammy, I've gone agin you and broke my promise, and this is the very Gorgio as you meant."

"Call the vision back," I said; "play the air again, dear Sinfi."

She sprang in front of me, and seizing one of my wrists, she gazed in my face, and said, "Yes, it's 'dear Sinfi!' You wants dear Sinfi to fiddle the Georgio's livin' mullo back to you."

I looked into the dark eyes, lately so kind. I did not know them. They were dilated and grown red-brown in hue, like the scorched colour of a North African lion's mane, and along the eyelashes a phosphorescent light seemed to play. What did it mean? Was it indeed Sinfi standing there, rigid as a column, with a clenched brown fist drawn up to the broad, heaving breast, till the knuckles shone white, as if about to strike me? What made her throw

out her arms as if struggling desperately with the air, or with some unseen foe who was binding her with chains?

I stood astounded, watching her, as she gradually calmed down and became herself again; but I was deeply perplexed and deeply troubled.

After a while she said, "Let's go back to 'the Place,'" and without waiting for my acquiescence, she strode along down the path towards Beddgelert.

I was quickly by her side, but felt as little in the mood for talking as she did. Suddenly a small lizard glided from the grass.

"The Romany Sap!" cried Sinfi, and she—the fearless woman before whom the stoutest Gypsy men had quailed—sobbed wildly in terror. She soon recovered herself, and said: "What a fool you must think me, Hal! It wur all through talkin' about the Romany Sap. At fust I thought it wur the Romany Sap itself, an' it wur only a poor little effet arter all. There ain't a-many things made o' flesh and blood as can make Sinfi Lovell show the white feather; but I know you'll think the wuss o' me arter this, Hal. But while the pictur were a-showin' I heard my dear mammy's whisper: 'Little Sinfi, little Sinfi, beware o' Gorgios! This is the one.'"

## V.

By the time we reached the encampment it was quite dark. Panuel, and indeed most of the Gypsies, had turned into the tents for the night; but both Videy Lovell and Rhona Boswell were moving about as briskly as though the time was early morning, one with guile expressed in every feature, the other shedding that aura of frankness and sweet winsomeness which enslaved Percy Aylwin, and no wonder.

Rhona was in a specially playful mood, and came dancing round us more like a child of six than a young woman with a Romany Rye for a lover.

But neither Sinfi nor I was in the mood for frolic. My living-waggon, which still went about wherever the Lovells

went, had been carefully prepared for me by Rhona, and I at once went into it, not with the idea of getting much sleep, but in order to be alone with my thoughts. What was I to think of my experiences of that evening? Was I really to take the spectacle that had seemed to fall upon my eyes when listening to Sinfi's crwth, or rather when listening to her song, as evidence that Winifred was alive? Oh, if I could, if I could! Was I really to accept as true this fantastic superstition about the crwth and the spirits of Snowdon and the "living mullo"? That was too monstrous a thought even for me to entertain. Notwithstanding all that had passed in the long and dire struggle between my reason and the mysticism inherited with the blood of two lines of superstitious ancestors, which circumstances had conspired to foster, my reason had only been baffled and thwarted; it had not really been slain.

What, then, could be the explanation of the spectacle that had seemed to fall upon my eyes? "It is hallucination," I said, "and it is the result of two very powerful causes—my own strong imagination, excited to a state of feverish exaltation by the long strain of my suffering, and that power in Sinfi which D'Arcy had described as her 'half-unconscious power as a mesmerist.' At a moment when my will, weakened by sorrow and pain, lay prostrate beneath my own fevered imagination, Sinfi's voice, so full of intense belief in her own hallucination, had leapt, as it were, into my consciousness and enslaved my imagination, which in turn had enslaved my will and my senses."

For hours I argued this point with myself, and I ended by coming to the conclusion that it was "my mind's eye" alone that saw the picture of Winifred.

But there was also another question to confront. What was the cause of Sinfi's astonishing emotion after the vision vanished? Such a mingling of warring passions I had never seen before. I tried to account for it. I thought about it for hours, and finally fell asleep without finding any solution of the enigma.

I had no conversation of a private nature with Sinfi until the next evening, when the camp was on the move.

"You had no sleep last night, Sinfi, I can see it by the dark circles round your eyes."

"That's nuther here nor there, brother," she said.

I found to my surprise that the Gypsies were preparing to remove the camp to a place not far from Bettws y Coed. I suggested to Sinfi that we two should return to the bungalow. But she told me that her stay there had come to an end. The firmness with which she made this announcement made me sure that there was no appeal.

"Then," said I, "my living-waggon will come into use again. The camping place is near some of the best trout streams in the neighbourhood, and I sadly want some trout-fishing."

"We part company to-day, brother," she said. "We can't be pals no more—never no more."

"Sister, I will not be parted from you; I shall follow you."

"Reia—Hal Aylwin—you knows very well that any man, Gorgio or Romany, as followed Sinfi Lovell when she told him not, 'ud ketch a body-blow as wouldn't leave him three hull ribs, nor a 'ounce o' wind to bless hisself with."

"But I am now one of the Lovells, and I shall go with you. I am a Romany myself—I mean I am becoming more and more of a Romany every day and every hour. The blood of Fenella Stanley is in us both."

She looked at me, evidently astonished at the earnestness and the energy of my tone. Indeed at that moment I felt an alien among Gorgios.

"I am now one of the Lovells," I said, "and I shall go with you."

"We part company to-night, brother, fare ye well," she said.

As she stood delivering this speech—her head erect, her eyes flashing angrily at me, her brown fists tightly clenched, I knew that further resistance would be futile.

"But now I wants to be left alone," she said.

She bent her head forward in a listening attitude, and I heard her murmur, "I knowed it 'ud come ag'in. A Romany sperrit likes to come up in the evenin' and smell the heather an' see the shinin' stars come out."

While she was speaking, she began to move off between the trees. But she turned, took hold of both my hands, and gazed into my eyes. Then she moved away again, and I was beginning to follow her. She turned and said: "Don't follow me. There ain't no place for ye among the Romanies. Go the ways o' the Gorgios, Hal Aylwin, an' let Sinfi Lovell go hern."

As I leaned against a tree and watched Sinfi striding through the grass till she passed out of sight, the entire panorama of my life passed before me.

"She has left me with a blessing after all," I said; "my poor Sinfi has taught me the lesson that he who would fain be cured of the disease of a wasting sorrow must burn to ashes Memory. He must flee Memory and never look back."

## VI.

And did I flee Memory? When I re-entered the bungalow next day it was my intention to leave it and Wales at once and for ever, and indeed to leave England at once—perhaps for ever, in order to escape from the unmanning effect of the sorrowful brooding which I knew had become a habit. "I will now," I said, "try the nepenthe that all my friends in their letters are urging me to try—I will travel. Yes, I will go to Japan. My late experiences should teach me that Ja'afar's 'Angel of Memory,' who refashioned for him his dead wife out of his own sorrow and tears, did him an ill service. He who would fain be cured of the disease of a wasting sorrow should try to flee the 'Angel of Memory,' and never look back."

And so fixed was my mind upon travelling that I wrote to several of my friends, and told them of my intention. But I need scarcely say that as I urged them to keep the matter secret it was talked about far and wide. Indeed, as I afterwards found to my cost, there were paragraphs in the newspapers stating that the eccentric amateur painter and heir of one branch of the Aylwins had at last gone to Japan, and that as his deep interest in a certain charming beauty of an un-English type was proverbial, it was expected that he would return with a Japanese, or perhaps a Chinese, wife.

But I did not go to Japan; and what prevented me?

My reason told me that what I had just seen near Beddgelert was an optical illusion. I had become very learned in the subject of optical illusions ever since I had known Sinfi Lovell, and especially since I had seen that picture of Winnie in the water near Bettws y Coed, which

I have described in an earlier chapter. Every book I could get upon optical illusions I had read, and I was astonished to find how many instances are on record of illusions of a much more powerful kind than mine.

And yet I could not leave Snowdon. The mountain's very breath grew sweeter and sweeter of Winnie's lips. As I walked about the hills I found myself repeating over and over again one of the verses which Winnie used to sing to me as a child at Raxton.

Eryri fynyddig i mi,
Bro dawel y delyn yw,
Lle mae'r defaid a'r wyn,
Yn y mwswg a'r brwyn,
Am cân inau'n esgyn i fyny,
A'r gareg yn ateb i fyny, i fyny,
O'r lle bu'r eryrod yn byw.*

But then I felt that Sinfi was the mere instrument of the mysterious magic of y Wyddfa, that magic which no other mountain in Europe exercises. I knew that among all the Gypsies, Sinfi was almost the only one who possessed that power which belonged once to her race, that power which is expressed in a Scottish word now universally misused, "glamour," the power which Johnnie Faa and his people brought into play when they abducted Lady Casilis.

Soon as they saw her well-faured face
They cast the glamour oure her.[1]

"Yes," I said, "I am convinced that my illusion is the result of two causes: my own brooding over Winnie's tragedy and the glamour that Sinfi sheds around her, either consciously or unconsciously; that imperious imagination of hers which projects her own visions upon the senses of another person either with or without an exercise of her own will. This is the explanation, I am convinced."

Wheresoever I now went, Snowdon's message to my heart was, "She lives," and my heart accepted the message. And then the new blessed feeling that Winnie was not

*Mountain-wild Snowdon for me!
Sweet silence there for the harp,
Where loiter the ewes and the lambs,
In the moss and the rushes,
Where one's song goes sounding up!
And the rocks re-echo it higher and higher
In the heights where the eagles live.

lying in a pauper grave had an effect upon me that a few who read these pages will understand—only a few. Perhaps, indeed, even those I am thinking of, those who, having lost the one being they loved, feel that the earth has lost all its beauty—perhaps even these may not be able to sympathise fully with me in this matter, never having had an experience remotely comparable with mine.

When I thought of Winifred lying at the bottom of some chasm in Snowdon, my grief was very great, as these pages show. Yet it was not intolerable; it did not threaten to unseat my reason, for even then, when I knew so little of the magic of y Wyddfa, I felt how close was the connection between my darling and the hills that knew her and loved her. But during the time that her death, amidst surroundings too appalling to contemplate, hung before my eyes in a dreadful picture—during the time when it seemed certain that her death in a garret, her burial in a pauper pit six coffins deep, was a hideous truth and no fancy, all the beauty with which Nature seemed at one time clothed was wiped away as by a sponge. The earth was nothing more than a charnel house, the skies above it were the roof of the Palace of Nin-ki-gal. But now that Snowdon had spoken to me the old life which had formerly made the world so beautiful and so beloved came back.

All nature seemed rich and glowing with the deep expectance of my heart. The sunrise and the sunset seemed conscious of Winnie, and the very birds seemed to be warbling at times "She's alive."

# XIV.

# Sinfi's Coup de Theatre

# XIV.—SINFI'S COUP DE THEATRE

## I.

WEEKS passed by. I visited all the scenes that were in the least degree associated with Winnie.

The two places nearest to me—Fairy Glen and the Swallow Falls—which I had always hitherto avoided on account of their being the favourite haunts of tourists—I left to the last, because I specially desired to see them by moonlight. With regard to Fairy Glen, I had often heard Winnie say how she used to go there by moonlight and imagine the Tylwyth Teg or the fairy scenes of the "Midsummer Night's Dream" which I had told her of long ago—imagine them so vividly that she could actually see, on a certain projecting rock in the cliffs that enclose the dell, the figure of Titania dressed in green, with a wreath of leaves round her head. And with regard to the Swallow Falls, I remembered only too well her telling me, on the night of the landslip, the Welsh legend of Sir John Wynn, who died in the seventeenth century, and whose ghost, imprisoned at the bottom of the Falls on account of his ill-deeds in the flesh, was heard to shriek amid the din of the waters. On that fatal night, she told me that on certain rare occasions, when the moon shines straight down the chasm, the wail will become an agonised shriek. I had often wondered what natural sound this was which could afford such pabulum to my old foe, Superstition. So one night, when the moon was shining brilliantly—so brilliantly that the light seemed very little feebler than that of day—I walked in the direction of the Swallow Falls.

Being afraid that I should not get much privacy at the Falls, I started late. But I came upon only three or four

people on the road. I had forgotten that my own passion for moonlight was entirely a Romany inheritance. I had forgotten that a family of English tourists will carefully pull down the blinds and close the shutters, in order to enjoy the luxury of candle-light, lamp-light, or gas, when a Romany will throw wide open the tent's mouth to enjoy the light he loves most of all—"chonesko dood," as he calls the moonlight. As I approached the Swallow Falls Hotel, I lingered to let my fancy feast in anticipation on the lovely spectacle that awaited me. When I turned into the wood I encountered only one person, a lady, and she hurried back to the hotel as soon as I approached the river.

Following the slippery path as far as it led down the dell, I stopped at the brink of a pool about a dozen yards, apparently, from the bottom, and looked up at the water. Bursting like a vast belt of molten silver out of an eerie wilderness of rocks and trees, the stream, as it tumbled down between high walls of cliff to the platform of projecting rocks around the pool at the edge of which I stood, divided into three torrents, which themselves were again divided and scattered by projecting boulders into cascades before they fell into the gulf below. The whole seemed one wide cataract of living moonlight that made the eyes ache with beauty.

Amid the din of the water I listened for the wail which had so deeply impressed Winifred, and certainly there was what may be described as a sound within a sound, which ears so attuned to every note of Superstition's gamut as Winifred's might easily accept as the wail of Sir John Wynn's ghost.

There was no footpath down to the bottom, but I descended without any great difficulty, though I was now soaked in spray. Here the mysterious human sound seemed to be less perceptible amid the din of the torrent than from the platform where I had stayed to listen to it. But when I climbed up again to the spot by the mid-pool where I had originally stood, a strange sensation came to me. My recollection of Winnie's words on the night of the landslip came upon me with such overmastering power that the noise of the cataract seemed changed to the sound of billows tumbling on Raxton sands, and the "wail" of Sir John Wynn seemed changed to that shriek from Raxton cliff which appalled Winnie as it appalled me.

The following night I passed into a moonlight as bright as that which had played me such fantastic tricks at the Swallow Falls.

It was not until I had crossed the bridge over the Conway, and was turning to the right in the direction of Fairy Glen, that I fully realised how romantic the moonlight was. Every wooded hill and every precipice, whether craggy and bald or feathered with pines, was bathed in light that would have made an Irish bog, or an Essex marsh, or an Isle of Ely fen, a land of poetry.

When I reached Pont Llyn-yr-Afange (Beaver Pool Bridge) I lingered to look down the lovely lane on the left, through which I was to pass in order to reach the rocky dell of Fairy Glen, for it was perfumed, not with the breath of the flowers now asleep, but with the perfume I love most of all, the night's floating memory of the flowery breath of day.

Suddenly I felt some one touching my elbow. I turned round. It was Rhona Boswell. I was amazed to see her, for I thought that all my Gypsy friends, Boswells, Lovells, and the rest, were still attending the horse-fairs in the Midlands and Eastern Counties.

"We've only just got here," said Rhona; "wussur luck that we got here at all. I wants to get back to dear Gypsy Dell and Rington Wood; that's what I wants to do."

"Where is the camp?" I asked.

"Same place, twix Bettws and Capel Curig."

She had been to the bungalow, she told me, with a message from Sinfi. This message was that she particularly wished to meet me at Mrs. Davies's cottage—"not at the bungalow"—on the following night.

"She'll go there to-morrow mornin'," said Rhona, "and make things tidy for you; but she won't expect you till night, same time as she met you there fust. She's got a key o' the door, she says, wot you gev her."

I was not so surprised at Sinfi's proposed place of meeting as I should have been had I not remembered her resolution not to return to the bungalow, and not to let me return to the camp.

"You must be sure to go to meet her at the cottage to-morrow night, else you'll be too late."

"Why too late?" I asked.

"Well," said Rhona, "I can't say as I knows why ezackly.

But I know she's bin an' bought beautiful dresses at Chester, or somewheres,—an' I think she's goin' to be married the day arter to-morrow."

"Married! to whom?"

"Well, I can't say as I rightly knows," said Rhona.

"Do you know whether Mr. Cyril is in Wales?" I asked.

"Yes," said Rhona, "him and the funny un are not far from Capel Curig. Now I come to think on't, it's mose likely Mr. Cyril as she's goin' to marry, for I know it ain't no Romany chal. It *can't* be the funny un," added she, laughing.

"But where's the wedding to take place?"

"I can't say as I knows ezackly," said Rhona; "but I thinks it's by Knockers' Llyn if it ain't on the top o' Snowdon."

"Good heavens, girl!" I said. "What on earth makes you think that? That pretty little head of yours is stuffed with the wildest nonsense. I can make nothing out of you, so good-night. Tell her I'll be there."

And I was leaving her to walk down the lane when I turned back and said, "How long has Sinfi been at the camp?"

"On'y jist come. She's bin away from us for a long while," said Rhona.

And then she looked as if she was tempted to reveal some secret that she was bound not to tell.

"Sinfi's been very bad," she went on, "but she's better now. Her daddy says she's under a cuss. She's been a wastin' away like, but she's better now."

"So it's Sinfi who is under a curse now," I said to myself. "I suppose Superstition has at last turned her brain. This perhaps explains Rhona's mad story."

"Does anybody but you think she's going to be married?" I asked her. "Does her father think so?"

"Her daddy says it ain't Sinfi as is goin' to be married; but *I* think it's Sinfi! An' you'll know all about it the day arter to-morrow." And she tripped away in the direction of the camp.

Lost in a whirl of thoughts and speculations, I turned into Fairy Glen. And now, below me, lay the rocky dell so dearly beloved by Winnie; and there I walked in such a magic web of light and shade as can only be seen in that glen when the moon hangs over it in a certain position.

I descended the steps to the stream and sat down for a time on one of the great boulders and asked myself if this was the very boulder on which Winnie used to sit when she conjured up her childish visions of fairyland. And by that sweet thought the beauty of the scene became intensified. There, while the unbroken torrent of the Conway—glittering along the narrow gorge of the glen between silvered walls of rock as upright as the turreted bastions of a castle—seemed to flash a kind of phosphorescent light of its own upon the flowers and plants and sparsely scattered trees along the sides, I sat and passed into Winifred's own dream, and the Tylwyth Teg, which to Winnie represented Oberon and Titania and the whole group of fairies, swept before me.

Awaking from this dream, I looked up the wall of the cliff to enjoy one more sight of the magical beauty, when there fell upon my eyes, or seemed to fall, a sight that, though I felt it must be a delusion, took away my breath. Standing on a piece of rock that was flush with one of the steps by which I had descended was a slender girlish figure, so lissome that it might have been the famous "Queen of the Fair People."

"Never," I said to myself, "was there an optical illusion so perfect. I can see the moonlight playing upon her hair. But the hair is not golden, as the hair of the Queen of the Tylwyth Teg should be; it is dark as Winnie's own."

Then the face turned and she looked at the river, and then I exclaimed "Winifred!" And then Fairy Glen vanished and I was at Raxton standing by a cottage door in the moonlight. I was listening to a voice—that one voice to whose music every chord of life within me was set forever, which said:

"I should have to come in the winds, and play around you on the sands. I should have to peep over the clouds and watch you. I should have to follow you about wherever you went."

The sight vanished. Although I had no doubt that what I had seen was an hallucination, when I moved further on and stood and gazed at the stream as it went winding round the mossy cliffs to join the Lledr, I felt that Winnie was by my side, her hand in mine, and that we were chil-

dren together. And when I mounted the steps and strolled along the path that leads to the plantation where the moonlight, falling through the leaves, covered the ground with what seemed symbolical arabesques of silver and grey and purple, I felt the pressure of little fingers that seemed to express "How beautiful!" And when I stood gazing through the opening in the landscape, and saw the rocks gleaming in the distance and the water down the Lledr valley, I saw the sweet young face gazing in mine with the smile of the delight that illumined it on the Wilderness road when she discoursed of birds and the wind.

The vividness of the vision of Fairy Glen drove out for a time all other thoughts. The livelong night my brain seemed filled with it.

> "My eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,
> Or else worth all the rest,"

I said to myself as I lay awake. So full, indeed, was my mind of this one subject that even Rhona's strange message from Sinfi was only recalled at intervals. While I was breakfasting, however, this incident came fully back to me. Either Rhona's chatter about Sinfi's reason for wanting to see me was the nonsense that had floated into Rhona's own brain, the brain of a love-sick girl to whom everything spelt marriage—or else poor Sinfi's mind had become unhinged.

## II.

As I was to sleep at the cottage, and as I knew not what part I might have to play in Sinfi's wild frolic, I told the servants that any letters which might reach the bungalow next morning were to be sent at once to the cottage, should I not have returned thence.

At about the hour, as far as I could guess, when I had first knocked at the cottage door, at the beginning of my search for Winnie, I stood there again. The door was on the latch. I pushed it open.

The scene I then saw was so exact a repetition of what had met my eyes when for the first time I passed under

that roof that it did not seem as though it could be real; it seemed as though it must be a freak of memory: the same long, low, room, the same heavy beams across the ceiling, the same three chairs, standing in the same places where they stood then, the same table, and upon it the crwth and bow. There was a brisk fire, and over it hung the kettle—the same kettle as then. There were on the walls the same pictures, with the ruddy fingers of the fire-gleam playing upon them and illuminating them in the same pathetic way, and in front of the fire, sitting upon the same chair, was a youthful female figure—not Winnie's figure, taller than hers, and grander than hers—the figure of Sinfi, her elbows resting upon her knees, and her face sunk meditatively between her hands.

After standing for fully half a minute gazing at her, I went up to her, and laying my hand upon her shoulder, I said, "This is a good sight for the Swimming Rei, Sinfi."

At the touch of my hand a thrill seemed to dart through her frame; she leaped up and stared wildly in my face. Her features became contorted with terror—as horribly contorted as Winnie's had been in the same spot and under the same circumstances. Exactly the same terrible words fell upon my ear:—

"Let his children be vagabonds and beg their bread; let them seek it also out of desolate places. So saith the Lord. Amen."

Then she fell on the floor insensible.

At first I was too astonished, awed, and bewildered to stir from the spot where I was standing. Then I knelt down, and raising her shoulders, placed her head on my knee. For a time the expression of horror on her pale features was fixed as though graven in marble. A jug of water, from which the kettle had been supplied, stood on the floor in the recess. I sprinkled some water over her face. The muscles relaxed, she opened her eyes; the seizure had passed. She recognised me, and at once the old brave smile I knew so well passed over her face. Rhona's words about the curse and the purchase of the dresses seemed explained now. Long brooding over Winnie's terrible fate had unhinged her mind.

"My girl, my brave girl," I said, "have you, then, felt our sorrow so deeply? Have you so fully shared poor

Winnie's pain that your nerves have given way at last? You are suffering through sympathy, Sinfi; you are suffering poor Winnie's great martyrdom."

"Oh, it ain't that!" she said, "but how I must have skeared you!"

She got up and sat upon the chair in a much more vigorous way than I could have expected after such a seizure.

"I am so sorry," she said. "It was the sudden feel o' your hand on my shoulder that done it. It seemed to burn me like, and then it made my blood seem scaldin' hot. If I'd only 'a' seed you come through the door I shouldn't have had the fit. The doctor told me the fits wur all gone now, and I feel sure as this is the last on 'em. You must go to Knockers' Llyn with me to-morrow mornin' early. I want you to go at the same time that we started when we tried that mornin' to find Winnie."

"Then Rhona's story is true," I thought. "Her delusion is that she is going to Knockers' Llyn to be married."

"The weather's goin' to be just the same as it was then," she said, "and when we get to Knockers' Llyn where you two breakfasted together, I want to play the crwth and sing the song just as I did then."

She made no allusion to a wedding. Getting up and pouring the boiling water from the kettle into the teapot, "Something tells me," she went on, "that when I touch my crwth to-morrow, and when I sing them words by the side of Knockers' Llyn, you'll see the picture you want to see, the livin' mullo o' Winnie."

"Still no allusion to a wedding, but no doubt that will soon come," I murmured.

"I want to go the same way we went that day, and I want for you and me to see everythink as we seed it then from fust to last."

I was haunted by Rhona Boswell's words, and wondered when she would begin talking about the wedding at Knockers' Llyn.

She never once alluded to it; but at intervals when the talk between us flagged I could hear her muttering, "He must see everythink just as he seed it then from fust to last, an' then it's good-bye forever."

At last she said, "I've had both the rooms upstairs made

tidy to sleep in—one for you and one for me. I'll call you in the mornin' at the proper time. Good night."

I was not sorry to get this summary dismissal and be alone with my thoughts. When I got to bed I was kept awake by recalling the sight I saw on entering the cottage. There seemed no other explanation of it than this, the tragedy of Winifred had touched Sinfi's sympathetic soul too deeply. Her imagination had seized upon the spectacle of Winifred in one of her fits, and had caused so serious a disturbance of her nervous system that through sheer fascination of repulsion her face mimicked it exactly as Winifred's face had mimicked the original spectacle of horror on the sands.

## III.

It was not yet dawn when I was aroused from the fitful slumber into which I had at last fallen by a sharp knocking at the door. When I answered the summons by "All right, Sinfi," and heard her footsteps descend the stairs, the words of Rhona Boswell again came to me.

I found that I must return to the bungalow to get my bath.

The startled servant who let me in asked if there was anything the matter. I explained my early rising by telling him that I was merely going to Knockers' Llyn to see the sunrise. He gave me a letter which had come on the previous evening, and had been addressed by mistake to Carnarvon. As the handwriting was new to me, I felt sure that it was only an unimportant missive from some stranger, and I put it into my pocket without opening it.

On my return I found Sinfi in the little room where we had supped. I guessed that an essential part of her crazy project was that we should breakfast at the llyn.

On the table was a basket filled with the materials for the breakfast.

Another breakfast was spread for us two on the table, and the teapot was steaming. Sinfi saw me look at the two breakfasts and smile.

"We've got a good way to walk before we get to the pool

where we are goin' to breakfast," she said, "so I thought we'd take a snack before we start."

As we went along I noticed that the air of Snowdon seemed to have its usual effect on Sinfi. In taking the path that led to Knockers' Llyn we saw before us Cwm-Dyli, the wildest of all the Snowdonian recesses, surrounded by frowning precipices of great height and steepness. We then walked briskly on towards our goal. When the three peaks that she knew so well—y Wyddfa, Lliwedd, and Crib Goch—stood out in the still grey light she stopped, set down her basket, clapped her hands, and said, "Didn't I tell you the mornin' was a-goin' to be ezackly the same as then? No mists to-day. By the time we get to the llyn the colours o' the vapours, what they calls the Knockers' flags, will come out ezackly as they did that mornin' when you and me first went arter Winnie."

All the way Sinfi's eyes were fixed on the majestic forehead of y Wyddfa and the bastions of Lliwedd, which seemed to guard it as though the Great Spirit of Snowdon himself was speaking to her and drawing her on, and she kept murmuring "The two dukkeripens."

But still she said nothing about her wedding, though that some such mad idea as that suggested by Rhona possessed her mind was manifest enough.

"Here we are at last," she said, when we reached the pool for which we were bound; and setting down her little basket she stood and looked over to the valley beneath.

The colours were coming more quickly every minute, and the entire picture was exactly the same as that which I had seen on the morning when we last saw Winifred on the hills—so unlike the misty drama that Snowdon mostly presents. Y Wyddfa was silhouetted against the sky, and looked as narrow and as steep as the sides of an acorn. Here we halted and set down our basket.

As we did so she said, "Hark! the Knockers! Don't you hear them? Listen, listen!"

I did listen, and I seemed to hear a peculiar sound as of a distant knocking against the rocks by some soft substance. She saw that I heard the noise.

"That's the Snowdon spirits as guards more copper mines than ever yet's been found. And they're dwarfs. I've seed

'em, and Winnie has. They're little, fat, short folk, somethin' like the woman in Primrose Court, only littler. Don't you mind the gal in the court said Winnie used to call the woman Knocker? Sometimes they knock to show to some Taffy as has pleased 'em where the veins of copper may be found, and sometimes they knock to give warnin' of a dangerous precipuss, and sometimes they knock to give the person as is talkin' warnin' that he's sayin' or doin' somethin' as may lead to danger. They speaks to each other too, but in a vi'ce so low that you can't tell what words they're a-speakin', even if you knew their language. My crwth and song will rouse every spirit on the hills."

I listened again. This was the mysterious sound that had so captivated Winnie's imagination as a child.

The extraordinary lustre of Sinfi's eyes indicated to me, who knew them so well, that every nerve, every fibre in her system, was trembling under the stress of some intense emotion. I stood and watched her, wondering as to her condition, and speculating as to what her crazy project could be.

Then she proceeded to unpack the little basket.

"This is for the love feast," said Sinfi.

"You mean betrothal feast," I said. "But who are the lovers?"

"You and the livin' mullo that you made me draw for you by my crwth down by Beddgelert—the livin' mullo o' Winnie Wynne."

"At last then," I said to myself, "I know the form the mania has taken. It is not her own betrothal, but mine with Winnie's wraith, that is deluding her crazy brain. How well I remember telling her how I had promised Winnie as a child to be betrothed by Knockers' Llyn. Poor Sinfi! Mad or sane, her generosity remains undimmed."

Before the breakfast cloth could be laid—indeed before the basket was unpacked—she asked me to look at my watch, and on my doing so and telling her the time, she jumped up and said, "It's later than I thought. We must lay the cloth arterwards." She then placed me in that same crevice overlooking the tarn whence Winnie had come to me on that morning.

Knockers' Llyn, it will perhaps be remembered, is enclosed in a little gorge opening by a broken, ragged fissure at the back to the east. Leading to this opening there is

on one side a narrow, jagged shelf which runs half-way round the pool. Sinfi's movements now were an exact repetition of everything she did on that first morning of our search for Winnie.

While I stood partially concealed in my crevice, Sinfi took up her crwth, which was lying on the rock.

"What are you going to do, Sinfi?" I said.

"I'm just goin' to bring back old times for you. You remember that mornin' when my crwth and song called Winnie to us at this very llyn? I'm goin' to play on my crwth and sing the same song now. It's to draw her livin' mullo, as I did at Bettws and Beddgelert, so that the dukkeripen of the 'Golden Hand' may come true."

"But how can it come true, Sinfi?" I said.

"The dukkeripen allus does come true, whether it's good or whether it's bad."

"Not always," I said.

"No, not allus," she cried, starting up, while there came over her face that expression which had so amazed me at Beddgelert. When at last breath came to her she was looking towards y Wyddfa through the kindling haze.

"There you're right, Hal Aylwin. It ain't every dukkeripen as comes true. The dukkeripen allus comes true, unless it's one as says a Gorgio shall come to the Kaulo Camloes an' break Sinfi Lovell's heart. Before that dukkeripen shall come true Sinfi Lovell 'ud cut her heart out. Yes, my fine Gorgio, she'd cut it out—she'd cut it out and fling it in that 'ere llyn. She did cut it out when she took the cuss on herself. She's a-cuttin' it out now."

Then without saying another word Sinfi took up her crwth and moved towards the llyn.

"You'll soon come back, Sinfi?" I said.

"We've got to see about that," she replied, still pale and trembling from the effects of that sudden upheaval of the passion of a Titaness. "If the livin' mullo does come you can't have a love-feast without company, you know, and I sha'n't be far off if you find you want me."

She then took up her crwth, went round the llyn, and disappeared through the eastern cleft. In a few minutes I heard her crwth. But the air she played was not the air of the song she called the "Welsh dukkerin' gilly which I had heard by Beddgelert." It was the air of the same idyll of Snowdon that I first heard Winifred sing on the sands of

Raxton. Then I heard in the distance those echoes, magical and faint, which were attributed by Winifred and Sinfi to the Knockers or spirits of Snowdon.

## IV.

THERE I stood again, as on that other morning, in the crevice overlooking the same llyn, looking at what might well have been the same masses of vapour enveloping the same peaks, rolling as then, boiling as then, blazing as then, whenever the bright shafts of morning struck them. There I stood again, listening to the wild notes of Sinfi's crwth in the distance, as the sun rose higher, pouring a radiance through the eastern gate of the gorge, and kindling the aërial vapours moving about the llyn till their iridescent sails suggested the wings of some enormous dragon-fly of every hue.

"Her song does not come," I said, "but, this time, when it does come, it will not befool my senses. Sinfi's own presence by my side—that magnetism of her, which D'Arcy spoke of—would be required before the glamour could be cast over me, now that I know she is crazy. Poor Sinfi! Her influence will not to-day be able to cajole my eyes into accepting her superstitious visions as their own."

But as I spoke a sound fell, not upon my ears alone, but upon every nerve of my body, the sound of a voice singing —a voice that was not Sinfi's, but another's:

I met in a gale a lone little maid
At the foot of y Wyddfa the white;
Oh, lissome her feet as the mountain hind
And darker her hair than the night;
Her cheek was like the mountain rose,
But fairer far to see,
As driving along her sheep with a song
Down from the hills came she.

It was the same voice that I heard singing the same song on Raxton Sands. It was the same voice that I heard singing the same song in the London streets—Winnie's!

And, then there appeared in the eastern cleft of the gorge, at the other side of the llyn, illuminated as by a rosy

steam, Winnie! Amid the opalescent vapours gleaming round the llyn, with eyes now shimmering as through a veil—now flashing like sapphires in the sun—there she stood gazing through the film, her eyes expressing a surprise and a wonder as great as my own.

"It is no phantasm—it is no hallucination," I said, while my breathing had become a spasmodic, choking gasp.

But when I remembered the vision of Fairy Glen, I said: "Imagination can do that, and so can the glamour cast over me by Sinfi's music. It does not vanish; ah, if the sweet madness should remain with me for ever! It does not vanish—it is gliding along the side of the llyn: it is moving towards me. And now those sudden little ripples in the llyn—what do they mean? The trout are flying from her shadow. The feet are grating on the stones. And hark! that pebble which falls into the water with a splash; the glassy llyn is ribbed and rippled with rings. Can a phantom do that? It comes towards me still. Hallucination!"

Still the vision came on.

When I felt the touch of her body, when I felt myself clasped in soft arms, and felt falling on my face warm tears, and on my lips the pressure of Winnie's lips—lips that were murmuring, "At last, at last!"—a strange, wild effect was worked within me. The reality of the beloved form now in my arms declared itself; it brought back the scene where I had last clasped it.

Snowdon had vanished; the brilliant morning sun had vanished. The moon was shining on a cottage near Raxton Church, and at the door two lovers were standing, wet with the sea-water—with the sea-water through which they had just waded. All the misery that had followed was wiped out of my brain. It had not even the cobweb consistence of a dream.

When, after a while, Snowdon and the drama of the present came back to me, my brain was in such a marvellous state that it held two pictures of the same Winnie as though each hemisphere of the brain were occupied with its own vision. I was kissing Winnie's sea-salt lips in the light of the moon at the cottage door, and I was kissing them in the morning radiance by Knockers' Llyn. And yet so overwhelming was the mighty tide of bliss overflowing my soul

that there was no room within me for any other emotion—no room for curiosity, no room even for wonder.

Like a spirit awakening in Paradise, I accepted the heaven in which I found myself, and did not inquire how I got there.

This did not last long, however. Suddenly and sharply the moonlight scene vanished, and I was on Snowdon, and there came a burning curiosity to know the meaning of this new life—the meaning of the life of pain that had followed the parting at the cottage door.

## V.

"Winnie," I said, "tell me where we are. I have been very ill since we parted in your father's cottage. I have had the wildest hallucinations concerning you; dreams, intolerable dreams. And even now they hang about me; even now it seems to me that we are far away from Raxton, surrounded by the hills and peaks of Snowdon. If they were real *you* would be the dream, but you are real; this waist is real."

"Of course we are on Snowdon, Henry!" said she. "You must indeed have been ill—you must now be very ill—to suppose you are at Raxton."

"But what are we doing here?" I said. "How did we come here?"

"Let Badoura speak for herself only," she said, with that arch smile of hers. She was alluding to the old days at Raxton, when she hoped that some day her little Camaralzaman would be carried by genii to her as she sat thinking of him by the magic llyn. "The genie who brought me was Sinfi Lovell. But who brought Camaralzaman? That is a question," she said, "I am dying to have answered."

At the name of Sinfi Lovell the past came flowing in.

"Then there *is* a Sinfi Lovell, Winnie! And yet she is one of the figures in the dream. There was no Sinfi Lovell with us at Raxton."

"Of course there is a Sinfi Lovell! You begin to make me as dazed as yourself. You have known her well; you and she were seeking me when I was lost."

"Then you *were* lost?" I said. "That, then, is no dream.

And yet if you were lost you have been—— But you are alive, Winnie. Let me feel the lips on mine again. You are alive. Snowdon told me at last that you were alive, but I dared not believe it, my darling. I dared not believe that my misery would end thus—thus."

There came upon her face an expression of distressed perplexity which did more than anything else to recall me to my senses.

"Winnie," I said, "my brain is whirling. Let us sit down."

She sat down by my side.

"You thought your Winnie was dead, Henry. Sinfi Lovell has told me all about it." Then, looking intently at me, she said, "And how your sorrow has changed you, dear!"

"You mean it has aged me, Winnie. I have observed it myself, and people tell me it has made me look older than I am by many years. These furrows around the eyes—these furrows on my brow—you are kissing them, dear."

"Oh! I love them; how I love them!" she said. "I am not kissing them to smooth them away. To me every line tells of your love for Winnie."

"And the hair, Winnie—look, it is getting quite grizzled." Then, as the lovely head sank upon my breast, I whispered in her ears, "Is there at last sorrow enough in the eyes, Winnie? Has the hardening effect of wealth coarsened my expression? Can a rich man for once enter the kingdom of love? Is the betrothal now complete? Are we both betrothed now?"

I stopped, for bliss and love were convulsing her with sobs, until you might have supposed her heart was breaking.

* * * * * * * *

While she lay silent thus, I was able in some degree to call my wits around me. And the difficulty of knowing in what course I ought to direct conversation presented itself, and seemed to numb my faculties and paralyse me.

After a while she became more composed, and sat in a trance, so to speak, of happiness.

But she remained silent. The conversation, I perceived, would have to be directed entirely by me. With the appalling seizures ever present in my mind, I felt that every word that came from my lips was dangerous.

"Look," I said, "the colours of the vapours round the llyn are as rich as they were when we breakfasted here together."

"We breakfasted here together! Why, what do you mean?" she said, looking in my face. "You forget, Henry, you never knew me in Wales at all; it was only at Raxton that you ever saw me."

"I mean when you breakfasted with the Prince of the Mist. I was the Prince of the Mist, dear."

She gave me a puzzled look which scared while it warned me. How cruel it seemed of Sinfi, who had planned this meeting, not to have told me how much and how little Winnie knew of the past.

"You know nothing about the Prince of the Mist except what I told you on Raxton sands," she said. "But you have been very ill; you will be well now."

"Yes," I said; "I have found the life I had lost, and these dreams of mine will soon pass."

As the conversation went on I began to see that she remembered our meetings on the sands—remembered everything up to a certain point. What was that point? This was the question that kept me on tenter-hooks.

Every word she uttered, however, shed light into my mind, and served as a warning that I must feel my way cautiously. It was evident to me that in some unaccountable way Sinfi at some time after she left me at Beddgelert had discovered that Winnie was not really dead, and had brought her back to me—brought her back to me restored in mind, but with all memory of what had passed during her dementia erased from her consciousness. Everything depended now upon my learning how much of her past she did remember. A single ill-judged word of mine—a single false move—might ruin all, and bring back the life of misery which I seemed at last to have left behind me.

## VI.

"Winnie," I said, "you have not yet told me how you came here. You have not yet told me how it is that you meet me on Snowdon—meet me in this wonderful way."

"Oh," said she with a smile, "Badoura has been a mere

puppet in the play. She had no idea she was going to meet her prince. Sinfi was suddenly seized with a desire that she and I should come back, and visit the dear old places we knew together. I was nothing loth, as you may imagine, but I could not understand what had made her set her heart upon it. When we reached Carnarvonshire I found that Sinfi's people were all encamped near to Bettws y Coed, and we went and stayed there. We visited all the places in the neighborhood that were associated with her childhood and mine."

"You went to Fairy Glen?" I said.

"Yes; we went there the night before last and saw it in the moonlight."

"I was there, and I saw you."

"Ah! then the man sitting on the boulder at the bottom was you! How wonderful! Sinfi was there on the step round the corner; she must have seen you. I know now why she suddenly hurried me away. She had told me that she wanted to see the Glen by moonlight."

"Then you did not know that you would meet me here?"

"My dear Henry, do you suppose that if I had known, I could have been induced to take part in anything so theatrical? When I saw you standing here my amazement and joy were so great that I forgot the strange way in which I stood exhibited."

I felt that the longer she chatted about such matters as these the more opportunities I should get of learning how much and how little she knew of her own story, so I said:

"But tell me how Sinfi contrived to trick you."

"Well, this morning was the time fixed for our visiting Llyn Coblynau, as we call Knockers' Llyn, which was my favourite place as a child. We were to see it when the colours of the morning were upon it. Then we were to go right to the top of Snowdon and take a mid-day meal at the hut there, and in the evening go down to Llanberis and sleep there. To-morrow morning we were to go to dear old Carnarvon and see again the beloved sea. I find now that her plan was to bring you and me together in this sensational way."

"Will she join us?" I asked.

"I know no more than you what will be Sinfi's next whim. At the last moment yesterday I was surprised to find that I was not to come with her here, as she was not to

sleep in the camp last night because she had promised to see a friend at Capel Curig. And now, shall I tell you how she inveigled me into taking my part in this Snowdon play she was getting up? She told me that she had the greatest wish to discover how the 'Knockers' echoes,' as they are called, would sound if in the early morning, she were to play her crwth in one spot, and I were to answer it from another spot with a verse of a Welsh song. It seemed a pretty idea, and it was agreed that when I reached the llyn I was to go round it to the opening at the east, pass through the crevice, and wait there till I heard her crwth."

"Well, Winnie, I must say that the way in which our Gypsy friend manipulated you, and the way in which she manipulated me, shows a method that would have done credit to any madness."

"You? How did she trick you?"

I was determined not to talk about myself till I had felt my way.

"Winnie, dear," I said, "seeing you is such a surprise, and my illness has left me so weak, that I must wait before talking about myself. I shall be more able to do this after I have learnt more of what has befallen you. You say that Sinfi proposed to bring you to Wales; but where were you when she did so? And what brought you into contact with Sinfi again after—after—after you and I were parted in Raxton?"

"Ah! that is a strange story indeed," said Winifred. "It bewilders me to recall it as much as it will bewilder you when you come to hear it. I, too, seem to have been ill, and quite unconscious for months and months."

"Winnie," I said, "tell me this strange story about yourself. Tell it in your own way, and do not let me interrupt you by a word. Whenever you see that I am about to speak, stop me—put your hand over my mouth."

"But where am I to begin?"

"Begin from our first meeting on the sands on the night of the landslip."

But while I spoke I thought I observed her looking at the breakfast provided by Sinfi with something like the same wistful expression that was on her face on that morning forgotten by her but remembered by me so well, when she breakfasted so heartily on the same spot.

"Winnie," I said, "this mountain air has given me a

voracious appetite. I wonder whether you could manage to eat some of these good things provided by our theatrical manageress."

"I wonder whether I could," said Winnie. "I'll try—if you'll ask me no questions, but talk about Snowdon and watch the changes of the glorious morning. But we must call Sinfi."

"No, no. I want to talk to you alone first. By the time your story is over I at least shall be ready for another breakfast, and then we will call her."

This was agreed upon, and I sat down to my second breakfast with Winnie beside Knockers' Llyn. I sat with my face opposite to the llyn, and we had scarcely begun when I noticed Sinfi's face peeping round a corner of the little gorge. Winnie's back being turned from the llyn she did not see Sinfi, who gave me a sign that her part of that performance was to be looker-on.

I have not time to dwell upon what was said and done during our breakfast in this romantic place, and under these more than romantic circumstances. During the whole of the time the Knockers kept up their knockings, and it really seemed as though the good-natured goblins were expressing their welcome to the child of y Wyddfa.

# XV.

# The Daughter of Snowdon's Story

# XV.—THE DAUGHTER OF SNOWDON'S STORY

## I.

After the breakfast was ended Winifred went over the entire drama of that night of the landslip as far as she knew it. There was not an important incident that she missed. Every detail of her narrative was so vividly given that I lived it all over again. She recalled our meeting on the sands, and my inexplicable bearing when she told me of the seaman's present of precious stones to her father. She dwelt upon my mysterious conduct in insisting upon our ascending the cliff by different gangways. She recalled her picking up from the sands a parchment scroll and spelling out by the moonlight the words of the curse it called down upon the head of any one who should violate the tomb from which the parchment and the jewel had been stolen, but as she repeated the words of the curse she was evidently unconscious of the tremendous import of the words in regard to herself and her father. She told me of her desire to conceal from me, for my own sake merely, the evidence afforded by the scroll that my father's tomb had been violated. She recalled my seeing the parchment and being thrown thereby into a state of the greatest mental agony. She recalled my taking her hand as we neared the new tongue of land made by the *débris*, and peering round it as though in dread of some concealed foe, but evidently she had no idea *what* was behind there. She described the way in which my "foot slipped on the sand," and how I was thrown back upon her as she stood waiting to pass the *débris* herself. She spoke of my unaccountable and apparently mad suggestion that we should, although the tide was coming in, and we were already in danger of being im-

prisoned in the cove and drowned, sit down on the boulder made sacred to us both by our childish betrothal. She spoke of her own suspicion, and then her conviction, that some great calamity was threatening me on account of the violation of the tomb, and that the knowledge of this was governing all these strange movements of mine. She reminded me of my telling her that the shriek we both heard at the moment when the cliff fell was connected with the crime against my father and that it was the call from the grave, which according to wild traditions will sometimes come to the heir of an old family. She recalled the very words I used when I told her that in answer to this call I intended to remain there until the tide came in and drowned me. She dwelt upon the way in which I urged her to go and leave me, her own resolution to die with me, and her cutting up her shawl into a rope and tying herself to me. She recalled the sudden thunderous noise of the settlement in response to the tide, and my springing up and running to the mass of *débris* and looking round it, and then my calling her to join me; and finally she described her running toward Needle Point in order to pass round it before the tide should get any higher, her plunging into the sea and my pulling her round the Point.

It was manifest, from the first word she uttered to the last, that she had no idea who was the "miscreant," to use her oft-repeated word, who committed the sacrilege, and nothing could express what relief this gave my heart. I felt as though I had just escaped from some peril too dire to think of with calmness.

"You remember, Henry," said she, "how we ran to the cottage in our wet clothes. You remember how we parted at the cottage door. From that night till now we have never met, and now we meet—here on Snowdon—at the very llyn I was always so fond of."

"But tell me more, Winnie—tell me what occurred to you on the next morning."

"Well," said she. "I was always a sound sleeper, but my fatigue that night made me sleep until late the next morning. I hurried up and got breakfast ready for father and myself. I then went and rapped at his door, but I got no answer. His room was empty."

Winifred paused here as though she expected me to say something. A thousand things occurred to me to ask, but

until I knew more—until I knew how much and how little she remembered of that dreadful time, I dared ask her nothing—I dared make no remark at all. I said "Go on, Winnie; pray do not break your story."

"Well," said she, "I found that my father had not returned during the night. I did not feel disturbed at that, his ways were so uncertain. I did not even hurry over my breakfast, but dallied over it, recalling the scenes of the previous night, and wondering what some of them could mean. I then went down the gangway at Needle Point to walk on the sands. I thought I might meet father coming from Dullingham. I had to pass the landslip, where a great number of Raxton people were gathered. They were looking at the frightful relics of Raxton churchyard. They were too dreadful for me to look at. I walked right to Dullingham without meeting my father. At Dullingham I was told that he had not been there for some days. Then, for the first time, I began to be haunted by fears, but they took no distinct shape. When I returned to the landslip the people were still there, and still very excited about it. In the afternoon I went again on the sands, thinking that I might see my father and also that I might see you. I walked about till dusk without seeing either of you, and then I went back to the cottage. I had now become very anxious about my father, and sat up all night. The next morning after breakfast I went again on the sands. The number of people collected round the landslip seemed greater than ever, and many of them, I think, came from Graylingham, Rington, and Dullingham. They seemed more excited than they had been on the previous day, and they did not notice me as I joined them. I heard some one say in a cracked and piping voice, 'Well, it's my belief as Tom lays under that there settlement. It's my belief that he wur standing on the edge of the churchyard cliff, and when the cliff fell he fell with it.' Then the kind and good-natured little tailor Shales saw me, and I thought he must have made some signal to the others, for they all stood silent. I felt sure now that for some reason unknown to me, it was generally believed that my father had perished in the landslip. Mrs. Shales took me by the hand, and gently led me away up the gangway. When we reached the cottage I asked her whether my father's body had been found. She told me that it had not,

and was not likely to be found, for if it had really fallen with the landslip his body lay under tons upon tons of earth. I shall never forget the misery of that night; kind Mrs. Shales would not leave me, but slept in the cottage. I had very little doubt that the Raxton people were right in their dreadful guesses about my father. I had very little doubt that while walking along the cliff, either to or from the cottage, he had reached the point at the back of the church at the moment of the landslip, and been carried down with it, and I now felt sure that the shriek you and I both heard was his shriek of terror as he fell. I bethought me of the jewels that my father's sailor friend was to give him, and searched the cottage for them. As I could not find them, I felt sure that it was on his return from his meeting with his sailor friend, when the jewels were upon him, that he fell with the landslip."

Again Winnie paused as if awaiting some question, or at least some remark from me.

"Did you make no inquiries about me?" I said.

"Oh, yes," said she; "my grief at the loss of my father was very much increased by my not being able to see you. Mrs. Shales told me that you were ill—very ill. And altogether, you may imagine my misery. Day after day I got worse and worse news of you. And day after day it became more and more certain that my father had perished in the way people supposed. I used to spend most of the day on the sand, gazing at the landslip, and searching for my father's body. Every one tried to persuade me to give up my search, as it was hopeless, for his body was certain to be buried deep under the new tongue of land."

"But you still continued your search, Winnie?" I said, remembering every word Dr. Mivart had told me in connection with her being found by the fishermen.

"Yes, I found it impossible not to go on with it. But one morning after there had been a great storm, followed by a further settlement of the landslip, I went out alone on the cliffs. I said to myself, 'This shall be my last search.' By this time the news of your illness and the anxiety I felt about you helped much in blunting the anxiety I felt about my father's loss. But on this very morning I am speaking of something very extraordinary happened."

"Don't tell me, Winnie. For God's sake, don't tell me! It will disturb you; it will make you ill again."

She looked at me in evident astonishment at my words.

"Don't tell you, Henry? Why, there is nothing to tell," said she. "As I was walking along the sands, looking at the new tongue of land made by the landslip, I seem to have lost consciousness."

"And you don't know what caused this?"

"Not in the least; unless it was my anxiety and want of sleep. This was the beginning of the long illness that I spoke of, and I seemed to have remained quite without consciousness until a few weeks ago. I often try to make my mind bring back the circumstances under which I lost consciousness. I throw my thoughts, so to speak, upon a wall of darkness, and they come reeling back like waves that are dashed against a cliff."

"Then don't do so any more, Winnie. I know enough of such matters to tell you confidently that you never will recall the incidents connected with your collapse, and that the endeavour to do so is really injurious to you. What interests me very much more is to know the circumstances under which you came to yourself. I am dying with impatience to know all about that."

## II.

"When I came to myself," said Winifred. "I was in a world as new and strange and wonderful as that in which Christopher Sly found himself when he woke up to his new life in Shakspeare's play."

She paused. She little thought how my flesh kindled with impatience.

"Yes, Winnie," I said; "you are going to tell me how, and where, and when you were restored to life—regained your consciousness, I mean—unless it will too deeply agitate you to tell me."

"It will not agitate me in the least, Henry, to tell you all about it. But it is a long story, and this seems a strange place in which to tell it, surrounded by these glorious peaks and covered by this roof of sunrise. But do you tell me all about yourself, all about your illness, which seems to have been a dreadful one."

My story, indeed! What was there in my story that I could or dare tell her? My story would have to be all about herself, and the tragedy of the supposed curse, and the terrible seizures from which she had recovered, and of which she must never know. I set to work to persuade her to tell me all she knew.

At last she yielded, and said, "Well, I awoke as from a deep sleep, and found myself lying on a couch, with a man's face bending over mine. I could not help exclaiming, 'Henry!'"

"Then did he resemble me?" I asked.

"Only in this—that in his eyes there was the expression which has always appealed to me more than any other expression, whether in human eyes or in the eyes of animals. I mean the pleading, yearning expression of loneliness that there was in your eyes when they were the eyes of a little lame boy who could not get up the gangways without me."

"Ah, the egotism of love," I exclaimed. "You mean, Winnie, that expression which my unlucky eyes had lost when we met upon the sands after our childhood was passed."

"But which love," said she, "love of Winnie, sorrow for the loss of Winnie, have brought back, increased a thousandfold, till it gives me pain and yet a delicious pain to look into them. Oh, Henry, I can't go on; I really can't, if you look——"

She burst into tears.

When she got calmer she proceeded.

"It was only in the expression of your eyes that he resembled you. He was much older, and wore spectacles. He, on his part, gave a start when he looked into my eyes. It seemed to me that he had been expecting to see something in them which he did not find there, and was a little disappointed. I then heard voices in the room, which was evidently, from the sound of the voices, a large room, and I looked round. I saw that there was another couch close to mine, but nearly hidden from view by a large screen between the two couches. Evidently a woman was lying on the other couch, for I could see her feet; she was a tall woman, for her feet reached out much beyond my own."

"Good heavens, Winnie," I exclaimed, "what on earth

is coming? But I promised not to interrupt you. Pray go on, I am all impatience."

"Well, at the sound of the voices the gentleman started, and seemed much alarmed—alarmed on my account, I thought.

"I then heard a voice say, 'A most successful experiment. Look at the face of this other patient, and see the expression on it.'

"The gentleman bent over me, and hurriedly raised me from the couch, and then fairly carried me out of the room. But you seem very excited, Henry, you have turned quite pale."

It would have been wonderful if I had not turned pale. So deeply burnt into my brain had been the picture I had imagined of Winnie dead and in a pauper's grave that even now, with Winnie in my arms, it all came to me, and I seemed to see her lying in a pauper's shroud, and being restored to life, and I said to her, "Did you observe—did you observe your dress, Winnie?"

She answered my question by a little laugh.

"Did I observe my dress at such a moment? Well, I knew you could be satirical on my sex when you are in the mood, but, Henry, there are moments, I assure you, when the first thing a woman observes is not her dress, and this was one. Afterwards I did observe it, and I can tell you what it was. It was a walking dress. Perhaps," said she with a smile, "perhaps you would like to know the material? But really I have forgotten that."

"Pardon my idle question, Winnie—pray go on. I will interrupt you no more."

"Oh, you will interrupt me no more! We shall see. The gentleman then led me through a passage of some length."

"Do describe it!"

"I felt quite sure you would interrupt me no more. Well! The dim light in the windows made me guess I was in an old house, and from the sweet smell of hay and wild flowers I thought we were near the Wilderness, at Raxton. I could only imagine that I had fallen insensible on the sands and been taken to Raxton Hall."

"Ah! that's where you ought to have been taken," I could not help exclaiming.

"Surely not," said Winnie.

"Why?"

"Your mother! But why have you turned so angry?"

In spite of all that I had lately witnessed of my mother's sufferings from remorse, in spite of all the deep and genuine pity that those sufferings had drawn from me, Winnie's words struck deeper than any pity for any creature but herself, and for a moment my soul rose against my mother again.

"Go on, Winnie, pray go on," I said.

"You *will* make me talk about myself," said Winifred, "when I so much want to hear all about you. This is what I call the self-indulgence of love. Well, then, the gentleman and I mounted some steps and then we entered a tapestried room. The windows—they were quaint and old-fashioned casements—were open, and the sunlight was pouring through them. I then saw at once that I was not anywhere near Raxton. Besides, there was no sea-smell mixed with the perfumes of the flowers and the songs of the birds. That I was not near Raxton, very much amazed me, you may be sure. And then the room was so new to me and so strange. I had never been in an artist's studio, but Sinfi had talked to me of such places, and there were many signs that I was in a studio now."

"A studio! And not in London! Describe it, Winnie," I said.

Although she had told me that the house was in the country, my mind flew at once to Wilderspin's studio. "You say that the gentleman was not young, but that he had an expression of sorrow in his eyes. Had he long iron-grey hair, and was he dressed—dressed, like a—like a shiny Quaker?" So full was my mind of Mrs. Gudgeon's story that I was positively using her language.

"Like a what?" exclaimed Winnie. "Really, Henry, you have become very eccentric since our parting. The gentleman had not iron-grey hair, and he was not dressed in the least like a Quaker, unless a loose, brown lounge coat tossed on anyhow over a waistcoat and trousers of the same colour is the costume of a shiny Quaker. But it was the room you asked me to describe. There were pictures on the walls, and there were two easels, and on one of them I saw a picture. The gentleman led me to a strange and very beautiful piece of furniture. If I attempted to describe it I should call it a divan, under a

gorgeous kind of awning ornamented with Chinese figures in ivory and precious stones. Now, isn't it exactly like an *Arabian Nights* story, Henry?"

"Yes, yes, Winnie; but pray go on. What did the gentleman do?"

"He drew a chair towards me, and without speaking looked into my face again. The expression in his eyes drew me towards him, as it had at first done when I awoke from my trance; it drew me towards him partly because it said, 'I am lonely and in sorrow,' and partly from another cause which I could not understand and could never define, howsoever I might try. 'Where am I?' I said; 'I remember nothing since I fell on the sands. Where is Henry? Is he better or worse? Can you tell me?' The gentleman said, 'The friend you inquire about is a long way from here, and you are a long way from Raxton.' I asked him why I was a long way from Raxton, and said, 'Who brought me here? Do, please, tell me what it means. I am amongst friends—of that I am sure; there is something in your voice which assures me of that; but do tell me what this mystery means.' 'You are indeed among friends,' he said. Then looking at me with an expression of great kindness, he continued, 'It would be difficult to imagine where you could go without finding friends, Miss Wynne.'"

"Then he knew who you were, Winnie?" I said.

"Yes, he knew who I was," said she, looking meditatively across the hills as though my query had raised in her own mind some question which had newly presented itself. "The gentleman told me that I had been very ill and was now recovered, but not so entirely recovered at present that I could with safety be burthened and perplexed with the long story of my illness and what had brought me there. And when he concluded by saying, 'You are here for your good,' I exclaimed, 'Ah, yes; no need for me to be told that,' for his voice convinced me that it was so. 'But surely you can tell me something. Where is Henry? Is he still ill?' I said. He told me that he believed you to be perfectly well, and that you had lately been living in Wales, but had now gone to Japan. 'Henry lately in Wales! now gone to Japan!' I exclaimed, 'and he was not with me after the illness that you say I have just recovered from?"

"Winnie," I said, "it was no wonder you asked those questions, but you will soon know all."

Whilst Winnie had been talking my mind had been partly occupied with words that fell from her about the voice of her mysterious rescuer. They seemed to recall something.

"You were saying, Winnie, that the gentleman had a peculiarly musical voice," I said.

"So musical," she replied, "that it seemed to delight and charm, not my mind only, but every nerve in my body."

"Could you describe it?"

"Describe a voice," she said, laughing. "Who could describe a voice?"

"You, Winnie; only you. Do describe it."

"I wonder," she said, "whether you remember our first walk along the Raxton road, when I made invidious comparison between the voices of birds and the voices of men and women?"

"Indeed I do," I said. "I remember how you suggested that among the birds the rooks only could listen without offence to the cackle of a crowd of people."

"Well, Henry, I can only give you an idea of the gentleman's voice by saying that the most fastidious blackbirds and thrushes that ever lived would have liked it. Indeed they did seem to like it, as I afterwards thought, when I took walks with him. It was music in every variety of tone; and, besides, it seemed to me that this music was enriched by a tone which I had learned from your own dear voice as a child, the tone which sorrow can give and nothing else. The listener, while he was speaking, felt so drawn towards him as to love the man who spoke. When his voice ceased, some part of his attraction ceased. But the moment the voice was again heard the magic of the man returned as strong as ever."

## III.

For some time during Winnie's narrative glimmerings of the gentleman's identity had been coming to me, and what she said of the voice seemed to be turning these glimmerings into shafts of light. I was now in a state of the greatest impatience to verify my surmise. But this only gave a sharper edge to my intense curiosity as to *how* she had been rescued by him.

"Winnie," I said, "you have said nothing about his appearance. Could you describe his face?"

"Describe his face?" said Winnie. "If I were a painter I could paint it from memory. But who can paint a face in words?"

Then she launched into a description of the gentleman's appearance, and gave me a specimen of that "objective" power which used to amaze me as a child, but which I afterwards found was a specialty of the girls of Wales.

"I should like a description of him feature by feature," I said.

She laughed and said, "I suppose I must begin with his forehead then. It was almost of the tone of white marble, and contrasted, but not too violently, with the thin crop of dark hair slightly curling round the temples, which were partly bald. The forehead in its form was so perfect that it seemed to shed its own beauty over all the other features; it prevented me from noticing, as I afterwards did, that these other features, the features below the eyes, were not in themselves beautiful. The eyes, which looked at me through spectacles, were of a colour between hazel and blue-grey, but there were lights shining within them which were neither grey, nor hazel, nor blue—wonderful lights. And it was to these indescribable lights, moving and alive in the deeps of the pupils, that his face owed its extraordinary attractiveness. Have I sufficiently described him? or am I to go on taking his face to pieces for you?"

"Go on, Winnie—pray go on."

"Well, then, between the eyes across the top of the nose, where the bridge of the spectacles rested, there was a strongly marked indented line which had the appearance of having been made by long-continued pressure of the spectacle frame. Am I still to go on?"

"Yes, yes."

"The beauty of the face, as I said before, was entirely confined to the upper portion. It did not extend lower than the cheek bones, which were well shaped."

"The mouth, Winnie? Describe that, and then I need not ask you his name, though perhaps you don't know it yourself."

"A dark brown moustache covered the mouth. I have always thought that a mouth is unattractive if the lips are so close to the teeth that they seem to stick to them; and

yet what a kind woman Mrs. Shales is, and her mouth is of this kind. But on the other hand where the space between the teeth and the lips is too great no mouth can be called beautiful, I think. Now, though the mouth of the gentleman was not ill-cut, the lips were too far from the teeth, I thought; they were too loose, a little baggy, in short. And when he laughed——"

"What about that, Winnie? I specially want to know about his laugh."

"Then I will tell you. When he laughed his teeth were a little too much seen; and this gave the mouth a somewhat satirical expression."

"Winnie," I said, "there is no need now for you to tell me the name of the gentleman. In a few sentences you have described him better than I could have done in a hundred."

"And certainly there is no reason why I should not tell you his name," she said, laughing, "for if there is a word that is musical in my ears, it is the name of him whose voice is music—D'Arcy. When he told me that I should know everything in time, and that there was nothing for me to know except that which would give me comfort, and said, 'You confide in me!' I could only answer, 'Who would not confide in you? I will wait patiently until you tell me what you have to tell.' 'Then,' said he, 'the best thing you can do is to lie down for an hour or two on that divan and rest yourself, and go to sleep if you can, while I go and attend to certain affairs that need me.' He then left the room. I was glad to be alone, for I was terribly tired. I felt as though I had been taking violent bodily exercise, but without feeling the staying power that Snowdon air can give. I lay down on the divan, and must have fallen asleep immediately. When I woke I found the same kind face near me, and the same kind eyes watching me. Mr. D'Arcy told me that I had been sleeping for two hours, and that it had, he hoped, much refreshed me. He told me also that he took a constitutional walk every day, and asked me if I would accompany him. I said, 'Yes, I should like to do so.' At this moment there passed the window some railway men leaving some luggage. On seeing them Mr. D'Arcy said, 'I see that I must leave you for a minute or two to look after a package of canvases that has just come from my assistant in London,' and he left me. When I was left alone I had an opportunity of observing the room. The walls

were covered with old faded tapestry, so faded indeed that its general effect was that of a dull grey texture. On looking at it closely I found that it told the story of Samson. Every piece of furniture seemed to me to be a rare curiosity."

"Now, Winnie," I said, "I am not going to interrupt you any more. I want to hear your story as an unbroken narrative."

## IV.

"Well," said Winnie, "after a while Mr. D'Arcy returned and told me that he was now ready to take me for a stroll across the meadows, saying, 'The doctor told me that, at first, your walks must be short; so while you go to your room I will get Mrs. Titwing in for my usual consultation about our frugal meal.'

"'My room,' I said, 'my room, and Mrs. Titwing; who's——'

"'Ha! I quite forgot myself,' he said, with an air of vexation, which he tried, I thought, to conceal. 'I will ring for Mrs. Titwing—the housekeeper—and she will take you to your room.'

"He walked towards the bell, but before reaching it he stopped as if arrested by a sudden thought. Then he said, 'I will go to the housekeeper's room and speak to Mrs. Titwing there. I shall be back in a minute.' And he passed from the room through the door by which he and I had first entered.

"Scarcely had the door closed behind him before a woman entered by another door opposite to it. She was about the common height, slender, and of an extremely youthful figure for a woman of middle age. Her bright complexioned face, lit by two watery blue eyes, was pleasant to look upon. It was none the less pleasant because it showed clearly that she was as guileless as a child.

"I knew at once that she was the person—the housekeeper—that Mr. D'Arcy had gone to seek at the other side of the house. Evidenly she had come upon me unexpectedly, for she gave a violent start, then she murmured to herself:

"'So it's all over, and all went off well,' she said. Then she walked quietly towards me and threw her arms round me and kissed me, saying, 'Dear child, I am so glad.'

"The tone of voice in which she spoke to me was exactly that of a nurse speaking to a little child.

"I was so taken by surprise that I pulled myself from her embrace with some force. The poor woman looked at me in a hurt way and then said:

"'I beg your pardon, miss. I didn't notice at first how —how changed you are. The look in your eyes makes me feel that you are not the same person, and that I have done quite wrong.'

"While she was speaking Mr. D'Arcy had re-entered the room by the door by which he went out. He had evidently heard the housekeeper's words.

"'Miss Wynne,' he said, 'this is Mrs. Titwing, my excellent housekeeper. She has been attending you during your illness; but your weakness was so great that you were unconscious of all her kindness.'

"I went up to her and kissed her rosy cheek, at which she began to cry a little. I afterwards found that she was in the habit of crying a little on most occasions.

"'Will you, then, kindly show me my room?' I said to her. But as she turned round to lead the way to the room, Mr. D'Arcy said to her.

"'Before you show Miss Wynne the way, I should like one word with you, Mrs. Titwing, in your room, about the arrangements for the day.'

"The two passed out of the room and again I was left to myself and my own thoughts.

## V.

"Evidently there was some mystery about me," said Winifred, continuing her story. "But the more I tried to think it out the more puzzling it seemed. How had I been conveyed to this strange, new place? Who was the wizard whose eyes and whose voice began to enslave me? and what time had passed since he caught me up on Raxton sand? It seemed exactly like one of those *Arabian Nights*

stories which you and I used to read together when we were children. The waking up on the couch, the sight of the end of the other couch behind the screen, and the tall woman's feet upon it, the voices from unseen persons in the room, and above all the strange magic of him who seemed to be the directing genie of the story—all would have seemed to me unreal had it not been for the prosaic figure of Mrs. Titwing. About her there could not possibly be any mystery; she was what Miss Dalrymple would have called 'the very embodiment of British commonplace,' and when, after a minute or two, she returned with Mr. D'Arcy, I went and kissed her again from sheer delight of feeling the touch of her real, solid, commonplace cheek, and to breathe the commonplace smell of scented soap. Her bearing, however, towards me had become entirely changed since she had gone out of the room. She did not return the kiss, but said, 'Shall I show you the way, miss?' and led the way out.

"She took me through the same dark passage by which I had entered, and then I found myself in a large bedroom with low panelled walls, in the middle of which was a vast, antique bedstead made of black carved oak, and every bit of furniture in the room seemed as old as the bedstead. Over the mantlepiece was an old picture in a carved oak frame, a Madonna and Child, the beauty of which fascinated me. I remember that on the bottom of the frame was written in printed letters the name 'Chiaro dell 'Erma.' I was surprised to find in the room another walking dress laid out ready for me to put on, not new, but slightly worn. I lifted it up and looked at it. I saw at a glance that it would most likely fit me like a glove.

"'Whose dress is this?' I said.

"'It's yours, miss.'

"'Mine? But how came it mine?'

"'Oh, please don't ask me any questions, miss,' she said. 'Please ask Mr. D'Arcy, miss; he knows all about it. I am only the housekeeper, miss.'

"'Mr. D'Arcy knows all about my dress!' I said. 'Why, what on earth has Mr. D'Arcy to do with my dress?'

"'Please don't ask me any more questions, miss,' she said. 'Pray don't. Mr. D'Arcy is a very kind man; I am sure nobody has ever heard me say but what he is a very kind man; but if you do what he says you are not to do,

if you talk about what he says you are not to talk about, he is frightful, he is awful. He calls you a chattering old—I don't know what he won't call you. And, of course, I know you are a lady, miss. Of course you look a lady, miss, when you are dressed like one. But then, you see, when I first saw you, you were not dressed as you are now, and at first sight, of course, we go by the dress a good deal, you know. But Mr. D'Arcy needn't be afraid I shall not treat you like a lady, miss. I'm only a housekeeper now, though, of course, I was once very different—very different indeed. But, of course, anybody has only to look at you to see you are a lady, and besides Mr. D'Arcy says you are a lady, and that is quite enough.'

"At this moment there came through the door—it was ajar—Mr. D'Arcy's voice from the distance, so loud and clear that every word could be heard.

" 'Mrs. Titwing, why do you stay chattering there, preventing Miss Wynne from getting ready? You know we are going out for a walk together.'

" 'Oh Lord, miss!' said the poor woman in a frightened tone, 'I must go. Tell him I didn't chatter—tell him you asked me questions and I was obliged to answer them.'

"The mysteries around me were thickening every moment. What did this prattling woman mean about the dress in which she had at first seen me? Was the dress in which she had first seen me so squalid that it had affected her simple imagination? What had become of me after I had sunk down on Raxton sands, and why was I left neglected by every one? I knew you were ill after the landslip, but Mr. D'Arcy had just told me that you had since been well enough to go to Wales, and afterwards to Japan.

"I put on the dress and soon followed her. When I reached the tapestried room there was Mr. D'Arcy talking to her in a voice so gentle, tender and caressing, that it seemed impossible the rough voice I had heard bellowing through the passage could have come from the same mouth, and Mrs. Titwing was looking into his face with the delighted smile of a child who was being forgiven by its father for some offence. As I stood and looked at them I said to myself, 'Truly I am in a land of wonders.'

## VI.

"Mr. D'Arcy and I," said Winifred, "went out of the house at the back, walked across a roughly paved stable-yard, and passed through a gate and entered a meadow. Then we walked along a stream, about as wide as one of our Welsh brooks, but I found it to be a backwater connected with a river. For some time we neither of us spoke a word. He seemed lost in thought, and my mind was busy with what I intended to say to him, for I was fully determined to get some light thrown upon the mystery.

"When we reached the river bank we turned towards the left, and walked until we reached a weir, and there we sat down upon a fallen willow tree, the inside of which was all touchwood. Then he said:

"'You are silent, Miss Wynne.'

"'And you are silent,' I said.

"'My silence is easily explained,' he said. 'I was waiting to hear some remark fall from you as to these meadows and the river, which you have seen so often.'

"'Which I see now for the first time, you mean.'

"'Miss Wynne,' he said, looking earnestly in my face, 'you and I have taken this walk together nearly every day for months.'

"'That,' I said, 'is—is quite impossible.'

"'It is true,' he said. And then again we sat silent.

"Then I said to him with great firmness, 'Mr. D'Arcy, I'm only a peasant girl, but I'm Welsh; I have faith in you, faith in your goodness and faith in your kindness to me; but I must insist upon knowing how I came here, and how you and I were brought together.'

"He smiled and said, 'I was right in thinking that your face expresses a good deal of what we call character. I should have preferred waiting for a day or two before relating all I have to tell in answer to what you ask, but as you *insist* upon having it now, it would be ill-bred for me to insist that you must wait. But before I begin, would it not be better if you were to tell me something of what occurred to yourself when you were taken ill at Raxton?'

"'Then will your story begin where mine breaks off?' I said.

" 'We shall see that,' he said, 'as soon as you have ended yours.'

" 'Do you know Raxton?' I said.

"At first he seemed to hesitate about his reply, and then said:

" 'No, I do not.'

"I then told him in as few words as I could our adventures on the sands on the night of the landslip, and my search for my father's body afterwards, until I suddenly sank down in a fit. When I had finished Mr. D'Arcy was silent, and was evidently lost in thought. At last he said:

" 'My story, I perceive, cannot begin where yours breaks off. I first became acquainted with you in the studio of a famous painter named Wilderspin, one of the noblest-minded and most admirable men now breathing, but a great eccentric.'

" 'Why, Mr. D'Arcy, I never was in a studio in my life until to-day,' I said.

" 'You mean, Miss Wynne, that you were not consciously there,' said he. 'But in that studio you certainly were, and the artist, who reverenced you as a being from another world, was painting your face in a beautiful picture. While he was doing this you were taken seriously ill, and your life was despaired of. It was then that I brought you into the country, and here you have been living and benefiting by the kind services of Mrs. Titwing for a long time.'

" 'And you know nothing of my history previously to seeing me in the London studio?' I asked.

" 'All that I could ever learn about that,' said he, in what seemed to me a rather evasive tone, 'I had to gather from the incoherent and rambling talk of Wilderspin, a religious enthusiast whose genius is very nearly akin to mania. He was so struck by you that he actually believed you to be not a corporeal woman at all; he believed you had been sent from the spirit world by his dead mother to enable him to paint a great picture.'

" 'Oh, I must see him, and make him tell me all,' I said.

" 'Yes,' said he, 'but not yet.'

"What Mr. D'Arcy told me," said Winnie, "affected me so deeply that I remained silent for a long time. Then came a thought which made me say:

" 'You, too, are a painter, Mr. D'Arcy?'

"'Yes,' he said.

"'During the months that I have been living here have you used me as your model?'

"'No; but that was not because I did not wish to do so.'

"Then he suddenly looked in my face and said,

"'Is your family entirely Welsh, Miss Wynne?'

"'Entirely,' I said. 'But why did you not use me as your model, Mr. D'Arcy?'

"'Poor Wilderspin believed you to be a spiritual body,' he said; 'I did not. I knew that you were a young lady in an unconscious condition. To have painted you in such a condition and without the possibility of getting your consent would have been sacrilege, even if I had painted you as a Madonna.'

"I could not speak, his words and tone were so tender. He broke the silence by saying:

"'Miss Wynne, there is one thing in connection with you that puzzles me very much. You speak of yourself as though you were a kind of Welsh peasant girl, and yet your conversation—well, I mustn't tell you what I think of that.'

"This made me laugh outright, for ladies who called on Miss Dalrymple used to make the same remark.

"'Mr. D'Arcy,' I said, 'you are harbouring the greatest little imposter in the British Islands. I am the mere mocking-bird of one of the most cultivated women living. My true note is that of a simple Welsh bird.'

"'A Welsh nightingale,' he said, with a smile, 'but who was the original impostor?'

"'Miss Dalrymple,' I said.

"'Miss Dalrymple, the writer!—why I knew her years ago—before you were born.'

"Our talk had been so lively that we had not noticed the passage of time, nor had we noticed that the clouds had been gathering for a summer shower. Suddenly the rain fell heavily; although we ran to the house, we were quite wet by the time we got in.

"We found poor Mrs. Titwing in a great state of excitement on account of the rain, and also because the dinner had been waiting for nearly an hour. That scamper in the rain, and the laughing and joking at our predicament, seemed to bring us closer together than anything else could have done. Mr. D'Arcy told Mrs. Titwing to take me to my room to

change my dress for dinner, and he seemed quite disappointed when I told him that I could eat no dinner, and would like to retire to my room for the night. The fact was that the events of that wonderful day had exhausted all my powers; every nerve within me seemed crying out for sleep.

"I went to my room, dismissed Mrs. Titwing, and went to bed at once. But no sooner had I got into bed than I began to perceive that, instead of sleep, a long wakeful night was before me. Mr. D'Arcy's story about finding me in a London studio took entire possession of my mind. How did I get there? Where had I been and what had been my adventures before I got there? Why did the painter, in whose studio Mr. D'Arcy found me, believe that I had been supernaturally sent to him? I shuddered as a thousand dreadful thoughts flowed into my mind. 'Mr. D'Arcy,' I said to myself, 'must know more than he has told me.' Then, of course, came thoughts about you. I wondered why you had allowed me to drift away from you in this manner. True, I was probably removed from Raxton immediately after my illness, when you were very ill, as I knew, but then you had recovered!"

## VII.

When Winifred reached this point in her story, I said:

"And so you wondered what had become of me from your last seeing me down to your waking up in Mr. D'Arcy's house?"

"Yes, yes, Henry. Do tell me what you were doing all that time."

As she said these words the whole tragedy of my life returned to me in one moment, and yet in that moment I lived over again every dreadful incident and every dreadful detail. The spectacle on the sands, the search for her in North Wales, the meeting in the cottage, the frightful sight as she leapt away from me on Snowdon, the heart-breaking search for her among the mountains, the sound of her voice, singing by the theatre portico in the rain, the search for her in the hideous London streets, the scenes in the studios, the soul-blasting drama in Primrose Court—all came upon me

in such a succession of realities that the beautiful radiant creature now talking to me seemed impossible except as a figure in a dream. And she was asking me to tell her what I had been doing during all these months of nightmare. But I knew that I never could tell her, either now or at any future time. I knew that to tell her would be to kill her.

"Winnie," I said, "I will tell you all about myself, but I must hear your story first. The faster you get on with that the sooner you will hear what I have to tell."

"Then I will get on fast," said she. "After a while my thoughts, as I tossed on my bed, turned from the past to the future. What was the future that was lying before me? For months I had evidently been living on the charity of Mr. D'Arcy. My only excuse for having done so was that I was entirely unconscious of it; but now that I did know the relations between us I must of course end them at once. But what was I to do? Whither was I to go? Besides Miss Dalrymple, whose address I did not know, I had no friends except Sinfi Lovell and the Gypsies and a few Welsh farmers. To live upon my benefactor's generous charity now that I was conscious of it was, I felt, impossible.

"I was penniless. I had not even money to pay my railway fare to any part of England. There was only one thing for me to do—write to you. When I rose in the morning it was with the full determination to write to you at once. I had been told by Mrs. Titwing that Mr. D'Arcy always breakfasted alone in a little ante-room adjoining his bedroom, and always breakfasted late. My breakfast, she said, would be prepared in what she called the little green room. And when I left my bedroom, dressed in a morning dress that was carefully laid out for me, I found the housekeeper moving about in the passages. She conducted me to the little green room. On the walls were two looking-glasses in old black oak frames, carved with knights at tilt and angels' heads hovering above them. Each frame contained two circular mirrors surrounded by painted designs, telling the story of the Holy Grail. The room was furnished with quaint sofas and chairs on which beautiful little old-fashioned designs were painted. She told me that as I had not named an hour for breakfasting I should have to wait about twenty minutes.

"In one corner of the room was a rather large whatnot,

on which lay one or two French novels in green and yellow paper covers and a few daily and weekly newspapers, which I went and turned over. Among them I was startled to find a paper called the *Raxton Gazette*. But I saw at once how it got there, for written on the margin at the top of the paper was the address, 'Dr. Mivart, Wimpole Street, London.' Mr. D'Arcy had told me that the gentleman whose voice I heard behind the screen was the medical man who attended to me during my illness, and it now suddenly flashed upon my mind that at Raxton there was a Dr. Mivart, though I had never seen him during my stay there. These were, no doubt, one and the same person, and some one from Raxton had posted the newspaper to the doctor's house in London.

"I looked down the columns of the paper with a very lively interest, and my eye was soon caught by a paragraph encircled by a thick blue pencil mark. It gave from a paper called the *London Satirist* what professed to be a long account of you, in which it was said that you were living in a bungalow in Wales with a Gypsy girl."

When Winifred said this I forgot my promise not to interrupt her narrative, and exclaimed:

"And you believed this infamous libel, Winnie?"

"To say that I believed it as a simple statement of fact would of course be wrong. I never doubted that you loved me as a child."

"As a child! Do you then think that I did not love you that night on Raxton sands?"

"I did not doubt that you loved me then. But wealth, I had been told, is so demoralising and I thought your never coming forward to find me and protect me in my illness might have something to do with inconstancy. Anyhow, these thoughts combined with my dread of your mother to prevent me writing you."

"Winnie, Winnie!" I said, "these theories of the so-called advanced thinkers, whom your aunt taught you to believe in—these ideas that love and wealth cannot exist together, are prejudices as narrow and as blind as those of an opposite kind which have sapped the natures of certain members of my own family."

"The sight of your dear sad face when I first saw it here was proof enough of that," she said. "As your life was said to be that of a wanderer, I did not care to write to

Raxton, and I did not know where to address you. What I had read in the newspaper, I need not tell you, troubled me greatly. I cried bitterly, and made but a poor breakfast. After it was over Mr. D'Arcy entered the room, and shook me warmly by the hand. He saw that I had been crying, and he stood silent and seemed to be asking himself the cause. Drawing a chair towards me, and taking a seat, he said:

"'I fear you have not slept well, Miss Wynne.'

"'Not very well,' I answered. Then, looking at him, I said, 'Mr. D'Arcy, I have something to say to you, and this is the moment for saying it.'

"He gave a startled look, as though he guessed what I was going to say.

"'And I have something to say to *you*, Miss Wynne,' he said, smiling, 'and this seems the proper time for saying it. Up to the last few weeks a young gentleman from Oxford has been acting as my secretary. He has now left me, and I am seeking another. His duties, I must say, have not been what would generally be called severe. I write most of my own letters, though not all, and my correspondence is far from being large. His chief duty has been that of reading to me in the evening. For many years my eyes have not been so strong as a painter's ought to be, and the oculist whom I consulted told me that the strain of the painter's work was quite as much as my eyes ought to bear, and that I could not afford much eyesight for reading purposes. I am passionately fond of reading. To be without the pleasure that books can afford me would be to make me miserable, and I have looked upon my secretary's duty of reading aloud to me as an important one. If you would take his place you would be conferring the greatest service upon me.'

"'Mr. D'Arcy,' I said, 'I suspect you.'

"'Suspect me, Miss Wynne?'

"'I suspect that generous heart of yours. I suspect you are merely inventing a post for me to fill, because you pity me.'

"'No, Miss Wynne; upon my honour this is not so. I will not deny that if it were not in your power to do me the service that I ask of you, I should still feel the greatest disappointment if you passed from under this roof. Your scruples about living here as you lived during your illness

simply as my guest—I understand, but do not approve. They show that you are not quite so free from the bondage of custom as I should like every friend of mine to be. The tie of friendship is, in my judgment, the strongest of all ties, stronger than that of blood, because it springs from the natural kinship of soul to soul, and there is no reason in the world why I should not offer you a home as a friend, or why, if the circumstances of our lives were reversed, you should not offer me one. But in this case it is the fact that the service I am asking you to render me is greater than any service I can render you.'

"I was so deeply touched by his words and by his way of speaking them, that my lips trembled, and I could make no reply.

" 'It is a shame,' he said, 'for me to talk about business, so soon after your recovery. Let us leave the matter for the moment, and come to me in the studio during the morning, and let me show you the pictures I am painting, and some of my choice things.'

"The morning wore on, and still I sat pondering over the situation in which I found myself. The servant came and moved the breakfast things, and her furtive glances at me showed that I was an object at once familiar and strange to her. But very little attention did I pay to her, in such a whirl of thoughts as I then was. The moment that one course of action seemed to me the best, the very opposite would occur to me as being the best. However, I was determined to know from Mr. D'Arcy, and at once, what was the state in which I was when I was brought to this place, and what had been the course of my life during my stay here. Mr. D'Arcy had told me that, for reasons which he so touchingly alluded to, he had not used me as a model. How, then, had my time been passed? To question poor Mrs. Titwing would only be to frighten her. I would ask Mr. D'Arcy for a full confession.

"Mrs. Titwing came into the room. She began pulling at the ribbon of her black silk apron as though she wanted to speak and could not find the proper words. At last she said:

" 'I hope, miss, there have been no words between you and Mr. D'Arcy?'

"'Words between me and Mr. D'Arcy? What do you mean?' I asked.

"'He seems very much upset, miss, about something. He is not at his easel, but keeps walking about the studio, and every now and then he asks where you are. I'm sure he used to dote on you when you were a child, miss.'

"'When I was a child?' I said, laughing. 'But I see what it is, I have been very neglectful. I promised to go into the studio to see the pictures, and he is, of course, impatient at my keeping him waiting. I will go to him at once,' and I went.

"When I entered the studio he turned quickly round and said:

"'Well?'

"'You were so kind,' I said, 'as to invite me to see your treasures.'

"'To be sure,' he said. 'I thought you came to give your decision.'

"He then showed me the curious divan upon which I had rested the day before, and explained to me the meaning of the carved designs."

## VIII.

Winifred described the designs on the divan so vividly that I could almost see them. But what interested me was the painter, not his surroundings; and she now seemed to grow weary of talking about herself.

"Did he," I said, "did he say anything about—about painters' models?"

"Yes," she continued, "Mr. D'Arcy took me to an easel and showed me a picture. It was only the half-length of a woman; but it was a tragedy rendered fully by the expression on one woman's face.

"'I had no idea,' I said, 'that any picture—any picture of a single face—could do such work as that. Was this painted from a model?'

"Yes,' he said with a smile, which was evidently at my ignorance of art. 'It was painted from life.'

"There were four other half-lengths in the room, all of them very beautiful.

" 'Two of these,' he said, 'are copies, the originals have been sold. The other two need still a few touches to make them complete.'

" 'And they were all painted from life?' I said.

" 'Yes,' he said. 'Why do you repeat that question?'

" 'Because,' I said, 'although they are all so wonderful and so beautiful in colour, I can see a great difference between them—I can scarcely say what the difference is. They are evidently all painted by the same artist, but painted in different moods of the artist's mind.'

" 'Ah,' he said, 'I am much interested. Let me see you classify them according to your view. There are, as you see, two brunettes and two blondes.'

" 'Yes,' I said, 'between this grand brunette, to use your own expression, holding a pomegranate in her hand and the other brunette whose beautiful eyes are glistening and laughing over the fruit she is holding up, there is the same difference that there is between the blonde's face under the apple blossoms and the other blonde's face of the figure that is listening to music. In both faces the difference seems to be that of the soul.'

" 'The two faces,' said he, 'in which you see what you call soul are painted from two dear friends of mine—ladies of high intelligence and great accomplishments, who occasionally honour me by giving me sittings—the other two are painted from two of the finest hired models to be found in London.'

" 'Then,' I said, 'an artist's success depends a great deal upon his model? I had no idea of such a thing.'

" 'It does indeed,' he said. 'Such success as I have won since my great loss is very largely owing to those two ladies, one so grand and the other so sweet, whom you are admiring.'

"The way in which he spoke the words 'since my great loss' almost brought tears into my eyes. He then went round the room, and explained in a delightful way the various pictures and objects of interest. I felt that I was preventing him from working, and told him so.

" 'You are very thoughtful,' he said, 'but I can only paint when I feel the impulse within me, and to-day I am lazy. But while you go and get your luncheon—I do not lunch myself—I must try to do something. You must have many matters of your own that you would like to attend to. Will

you return to the studio about five o'clock, and let me have your company in another walk?'

"Until five o'clock I was quite alone, and wandered about the house and garden trying my memory as to whether I could recall something, but in vain. At any other time than this I should no doubt have found the old house a very fascinating one; but not for two minutes together could my mind dwell upon anything but the amazing situation in which I found myself. The house was, I saw, built of grey stone, and as it had seven gables it suggested to me Nathaniel Hawthorne's famous story, of which my aunt was so fond. Inside I found every room to be more or less interesting. But what attracted me most, I think, was a series of large attics in which was a number of enormous oak beams supporting the antique roof. With the sunlight pouring through the windows and illuminating almost every corner, the place seemed cheerful enough, but I could not help thinking how ghostly it must look on a moonlight night.

"While the thought was in my mind, a strange sensation came upon me. I seemed to hear a moan; it came through the door of the large attic adjoining the one in which I stood, and then I heard a voice that seemed familiar to me, and yet I could not recall it. It was repeating in a loud, agonised tone the words of that curse written on the parchment scroll which I picked up on Raxton sands. I was so astonished that for a long time I could think of nothing else.

## IX.

"At five o'clock I was going towards the studio to keep my appointment when I met Mr. D'Arcy in his broad-brimmed felt hat, ready and waiting for me to take the proposed walk with him.

"Oh, what a lovely afternoon it was! A Welsh afternoon could not have been lovelier. In fact it carried my mind back here. The sun, shining on the buttercups and the grey-tufted standing grass, made the meadows look as though covered with a tapestry that shifted from grey to

lavender, and then from lavender to gold—as the soft breeze moved over it. And many of the birds were still in full song; and brilliant as was the music of the skylarks, the blackbirds and thrushes were so numerous that the music falling from the sky seemed caught and swallowed up by the music rising from the hedgerows and trees.

"I lingered at one of the gates through which we passed to enjoy the beauty undisturbed by the motion of my own body.

" 'I have often wished,' Mr. D'Arcy said, 'that I had a tithe of your passion for Nature, and all your knowledge of Nature. To have been born in London and to have passed one's youth there is a great loss. Nature has to be learnt, as art has to be learnt, in earliest youth.'

" 'What makes you know that my chief passion is love of Nature?' I asked.

" 'It was,' he said, 'the one thing you showed during your illness—during your unconscious condition.'

" 'And yet I remember nothing of that time,' I said. 'This gives me an opportunity of asking you something—an opportunity which I had determined to make for myself before another day went by.'

" 'And what is that?' he said, in a tone that betrayed some uneasiness.

" 'You have told me how I came here. I now want you to tell me, too, what was my condition when I came and what was my course of life during all this long period. How did the time pass? What did I do? I remember nothing.'

" 'I am glad you are asking me these questions,' he said, 'for I believe that the more fully and more exactly I answer them, the better for you and the better for me. Victor Hugo, in one of his romances, speaks of the pensive somnambulism of the animals. "Somnambulism," sometimes pensive and sometimes playful, is the very phrase I should use in characterising your condition when you first came here and down to your recovery from that strange illness. But this somnambulism would every now and then change and pass into a consciousness which I can only compare with that of a child. But no child that I have ever seen was so bewitchingly child-like as you were. It was this that made your presence such a priceless boon to me.'

" 'Priceless boon, Mr. D'Arcy!' I said. 'How could such a being as you describe be a priceless boon to any one?'

"'I will tell you,' he replied. 'Even before that great sorrow which has made me the loneliest man upon the earth—even in the days when my animal spirits were considered at times almost boisterous, I was always at intervals subject to periods of great depression, or rather, I should say, to periods of *ennui*. I must either be painting or reading or writing. I had not the precious faculty of being able on occasions to sit and let the rich waters of life flow over me. I would yearn for amusement, and search in vain for some object to amuse me. When you first came I was deeply interested in so extraordinary a case as yours; and after a while, when the acuteness of my curiosity and the poignancy of my sympathy for you had abated, you became to me a joy, as a child is a joy in the eyes of its parents.'

"'Then your interest in me,' I said with a smile, 'was that which you would feel towards a puppy or a kitten.'

"'I perceive that you have a turn for satire,' he said, laughing. 'I will not deny that I have an extraordinarily strong passion for watching the movements of animals. I have, to the sorrow of my neighbours, filled my garden in London with all kinds of purchases from Jamrach's. But from the moment that I knew you, who combined the fascination of a fawn and a child with that of a sylph or a fairy, my poor little menagerie was neglected, and what became of its members I scarcely know. I suppose I am very uncomplimentary to you, but you would have the truth. The moment that I felt myself threatened by the fiend *Ennui* I used to tell Mrs. Titwing, who was in the habit of calling you her baby, to bring you into the studio, and at once the fiend fled. At last I grew so attached to you that your presence was a positive necessity of my life. Unless I knew that you were in the studio I could not paint. It was necessary for me at intervals to look across the room at that divan and see you there amusing yourself—playing with yourself, so to speak, sometimes like a kitten, sometimes like a child. I would not have parted with you for the world.'

"He did not say he would not now part with me for the world, Henry, and I thought I understood the meaning of that expression of disappointment which I had observed in his eyes when I first saw them looking into mine. I thought I understood this extraordinary man—so unlike all others; I thought I knew why my eyes lost the charm he was now

so eloquently describing to me the moment that they became lighted with what he called self-consciousness.

"After a while I said, 'But as I was in such an unconscious state as you describe, how could you possibly know that a speciality of mine is a love of Nature?'

" 'It was only when you were out in the open air that the condition which I have compared to somnambulism seemed at times to disappear. Then your consciousness seemed to spring up for a moment and to take heed of what was passing around you. You would sometimes scamper through the meadows, pluck the wild flowers and weave them into wreaths round your head, or stand listening to the birds, or hold out your hands as if to embrace the sunny wind. One day when a friend of mine, a great angler, who comes here, was going down to the river to fish, you showed the greatest interest in what was going on. The fishing tackle seemed so familiar to you that my friend put a fishing rod into your hand and you went with him to the river. I do not myself care for angling, and I was at the time very busy with a picture, but I could not resist the temptation to follow you. You skipped into the punt with the greatest glee, baited your hook, adjusted your float on the line, cast it into the water, and fished with such skill that you caught two fish to my friend's one. Observing all these things, I came to the conclusion that you had lived much in the open air, and other incidents made me know that you were a great lover of Nature.'

" 'And you,' I said, 'must also be a lover of Nature, or you could not find such delight in watching animals.'

" 'No,' he said, 'the interest I take in animals has nothing whatever to do with love of Nature or study of Nature. They interest me by that unconsciousness of grace that makes them such a contrast to man.'

"We then went into the house. Our talk during our ramble in the fields seemed to remove effectually all awkwardness and restraint between us.

## X.

"That day," said Winnie, "a determination which had been caused by many a reflection during the last few hours induced me at dinner to lead the conversation to the subject of pictures and models, and in a few minutes Mr. D'Arcy launched out in an eloquent discourse upon a subject which was so new to me and so familiar to him.

"'You were saying this morning, Mr. D'Arcy,' I said, 'that you were indebted—I think you said you were specially indebted—to your models for your success as a painter.'

"'Yes,' he said. 'For many years a strange and unexampled good fortune has attended me in regard to models. "Mock modesty" has never been a vice of mine; I say what I simply mean when I tell you that without this good luck in regard to my models I could never have achieved such a position as is now mine. But why do you keep harping upon this subject? Why do you take all this interest in painters and their models?'

"'Because I want to be your model,' I said.

"He turned round upon me with an expression of the greatest delight on his face.

"'My dear Miss Wynne,' he said, 'I should never have dared to ask you to sit to me. I had told you about your sitting in an unconscious state to Wilderspin, and I saw how troubled and perplexed you were; and now that you are yourself I could not ask you to sit to me. Three or four pictures painted from you as you now are would not clash with Wilderspin's pictures, the expression being so entirely different, and they would make my fortune in every way.'

"'Why, what *can* you mean, Mr. D'Arcy?' I exclaimed in amazement.

"'I mean,' he said, 'that I have never yet had the chance of expressing in art a subtle and indescribable quality to be found in some few faces among your countrywomen—a quality which can only be described in the word Cymric. Even now, while I am talking to you, the subject for a picture has come to me—"The Spirit of Snowdon."'

"I clapped my hands with delight.

" 'It would be a complete departure from my present style," he said, "of which the fickle public may very soon begin to weary. But I fear you are doing this kindness to me—I fear you are offering to sit—because of the services it has been my privilege to render you. If you knew the service your company has rendered me, you would realise how immeasurably I have been overpaid.'

" 'Mr. D'Arcy,' I said, 'I have every reason to do what I want to do through gratitude, but the woman does not live who would not feel herself exalted by being turned to such use by your genius. The woman who sits as a model for a great painter in an immortal picture becomes in a way a priestess herself of Art. Her mission is only less than the painter's in nobility. And as to sitting for "The Spirit of Snowdon," what girl having within her breast the Cymric passion which nothing can quench would not feel that to do so was almost presumption? I hope you will let me sit to you as soon as you can.' "

"And so you sat for the Spirit of Snowdon, Winnie," I said.

"Yes," said Winnie; "I gave him several sittings."

"Ah, I can imagine the glorious result," I said.

"Can you?" said Winnie. "The glorious result was a failure, as Mr. D'Arcy himself was the first to admit."

"What!" I exclaimed, "he failed with a daughter of Snowdon for model?"

"To paint 'The Spirit of Snowdon' a painter, it seems, wants something more than a daughter of Snowdon for model," said Winnie. "He needs sympathy—full and undivided sympathy—with the race to whom Snowdon has been given. The picture was a failure and was soon abandoned."

## XI.

Either because she was wearied of talking about herself and her adventures, or because she was now approaching some point in her story which it was not pleasing to dwell upon, Winnie again proposed that her narrative should end here, at least for a time, and urged me to tell her what had

befallen myself since we had parted at the cottage door at Raxton. Even had it been possible for me to talk about myself without touching upon some dangerous incident or another, my impatience to get at the mystery of mysteries in connection with her and her rescue from Primrose Court was so great that I could only implore her to tell me what had occurred down to her leaving Hurstcote Manor, and also what had been the cause of her leaving.

"Well," said Winnie, "I am now going to tell you of an extraordinary thing that happened. One fine night the moon was so brilliant that after I quitted Mr. D'Arcy I stole out of the side door into the garden, a favourite place of mine, for old English flowers were mixed with apple trees and pear trees. I was strolling about the garden, thinking over a thousand things connected with you, and myself, and Mr. D'Arcy, when I saw stooping over a flower bed the figure of a tall woman. I could scarcely believe my eyes, for I had all the while supposed that, excepting Mr. D'Arcy, myself, and Mrs. Titwing, the servants were the only occupants of the place. I turned away, and walked silently through the little wicket into what is called the home close. As I pondered over the incident, I recalled certain things which singly had produced no effect on my mind, but which now fitted in with each other, and seemed to open up vistas of mystery and suspicion. Mysterious looks and gestures on the faces of the servants pointed to there being some secret that was to be kept from me. I had not given much heed to these things, but now I could not help connecting them with the appearance of the tall woman in the garden.

"Some guests arrived next day, and when I pleaded headache Mr. D'Arcy said, 'Perhaps you would rather keep to your own room to-day.'

"I told him I should, and I spent the day alone—spent it mainly in thinking about the tall woman. In the evening I went into the garden, and remained there for a long time, but no tall woman made her appearance.

"I passed out through the wicket into the home close, and as I walked about in the grass, under the elms that sprang up from the tall hedge, I thought and thought over what I had seen, but could come to no explanation. I was standing under a tree, in the shadow which its branches

made, when I became suddenly conscious that the tall woman was close to me. I turned round, and stood face to face with Sinfi Lovell. The sight of a spectre could not have startled me more, but the effect of my appearance upon her was greater still. Her face took an expression that seemed to curdle my blood, and she shrieked, 'Father! the curse! Let his children be vagabonds and beg their bread; let them seek it also out of desolate places.' And then she ran towards the house.

"In a few minutes Mr. D'Arcy came out into the field without his hat, and evidently much agitated.

" 'Miss Wynne,' he said, 'I fear you must have been half frightened to death. Never was there such an unlucky *contretemps*.'

" 'But why is Sinfi Lovell here?' I said, 'and why was I not told she was here?'

" 'Sinfi is an old friend of mine,' he said. 'I have been in the habit of using her as a model for pictures. She came here to sit to me, when she was taken ill. She is subject to fits, as you have seen. The doctor believed that they were over and would not recur, and I had determined that to-morrow I would bring you together.'

"I made no reply, but walked silently by his side across the field to the little wicket. The confidence I had reposed in Mr. D'Arcy had been like the confidence a child reposes in its father.

" 'Miss Wynne,' he said, in a voice full of emotion, 'I feel that an unlucky incident has come between us, and yet if I ever did anything for your good, it was when I decided to postpone revealing the fact that Sinfi Lovell was under this roof until her cure was so complete and decisive that you could never by any chance receive the shock that you have now received.'

"I felt that my resentment was melting in the music of his words.

" 'What caused the fits?' I said. 'She talked about being under a curse. What can it mean?'

" 'That,' he said, 'is too long a story for me to tell you now.'

" 'I know,' said I, 'that some time ago the tomb of Mr. Aylwin's father was violated by some undiscovered miscreant, and I know that the words Sinfi uttered just now are the words of a curse written by the dead man on a piece of

parchment, and stolen with a jewel from his tomb. I have seen the parchment itself, and I know the words well. Her father, Panuel Lovell, is as innocent of the crime of sacrilege as my poor father was. What could have made her suppose that she had inherited the curse from her father?'

"'I have no explanation to offer,' he said. 'As you know so much of the matter and I know so little, I am inclined to ask you for some explanation of the puzzle.'

"I thought over the matter for a minute, and then I said to him, 'Sinfi Lovell knows Raxton as well as Snowdon, and must have been very familiar with the crime. I can only suppose that she has brooded so long over the enormity of the offence and the appalling words of the curse that she has actually come at last to believe that poor, simple-minded Panuel Lovell is the offender, and that she, as his child, has inherited the curse.'

"'A most admirable solution of the mystery,' he said, his face beaming with delight."

## XII.

When Winnie got to this point she said, "Yes, Henry, poor Sinfi seems in some unaccountable way to have learnt all about that piece of parchment and the curse written upon it. She has been under the extraordinary delusion that her father, poor Panuel Lovell, was the violator of the tomb, and that she has inherited the curse."

"Good God, Winnie!" I exclaimed; and when I recalled what I had seen of Sinfi in the cottage, I was racked with perplexity, pity and wonder. What could it mean?

"Yes," said Winifred, "she has been possessed by this astounding delusion, and it used to bring on fits which were appalling to witness. They are passed now, however."

"Is she recovered now?"

"Mr. D'Arcy," said Winnie, "assured me that, in the opinion of the doctor, the delusion would not be permanent, but that Sinfi would soon be entirely restored to health. While Mr. D'Arcy and I were talking about her Sinfi came through the wicket again. Rushing up to me and seizing my hand, she said:

" 'Oh, Winnie, how I must have skeared you! I dare say Mr. D'Arcy has told you that I've been subject to fits o' late. It was comin' on you suddint as I did under the tree that brought it on. I wouldn't let Mr. D'Arcy tell you I wur here until I wur quite sure I should have no more on 'em, but the doctor said this very day that I wur now quite well.'

"My mind ran all night long upon the mystery of Sinfi Lovell. Mr. D'Arcy's explanation of her appearance at Hurstcote Manor was certainly clear enough, but somehow its very clearness aroused suspicion—no, I will not say suspicion—misgivings. If he had been able, while he seemed so frank and open, to keep away from me a secret—I mean the secret of Sinfi Lovell's being concealed in the house—what secrets might he not be concealing from me about my own mystery? Did he not know everything that occurred during that period which was a blank in my mind, the period from my sinking down on the sands to my waking up in his house?

"From the very first, indeed, a feeling of mystery had haunted me. I had often pondered over every circumstance that attended my waking into life, but that incident which was the most firmly fixed in my mind was the sight of the feet of a tall woman whose body was hid by the screen between my couch and the other one. When I asked Mr. D'Arcy about this, he did not say in so many words that I was suffering from a delusion about those feet, but he talked about the illusion which generally accompanied a recovery from such illnesses as mine. Now of course I felt sure that Sinfi was the person I had seen on the couch. But why was she there?

"I did not see Mr. D'Arcy until the afternoon after the guests had left, for in order to avoid seeing him and them, I took a long stroll by the river and then got into the punt. I had scarcely done so when Sinfi appeared on the bank and hailed me. I took her into the punt. She was so entirely herself that I found it difficult to believe in the startling spectacle of the previous evening, although her expression was careworn, and she certainly looked a little paler than she used to look when she and I and Rhona Boswell were such great friends; her splendid beauty and bearing were as striking as ever, I thought. I was expecting every minute that she would say something about what occurred

under the elm tree in the home close. But she did not allude to it, and therefore I did not. We spent the entire afternoon in reminiscences of Carnarvonshire. When she told me that she knew you and that you had been there together, and when she told me the cause of your being there, and told me of your search for me, and all the distress that came to you on my account, my longing to see you was like a fever.

"But vivid as were the pictures that Sinfi gave me of your search for me, I could not piece them together in a plain tale. I tried to do so; it was impossible. What had happened to me after I had become unconscious on the sands in that unaccountable way—why I was found in Wales—how I could possibly have got there without knowing about it—what had led to my being discovered by Mr. D'Arcy—discovered in London, above all places, and in a painter's studio—these questions were with me night and day, and Sinfi was entirely unable to tell me anything about the matter, unless, as I sometimes half-thought, she was concealing something from me."

"How could you have suspicions of poor Sinfi?" I said, for I was becoming alarmed at the way in which these inquiries were absorbing Winnie's mind.

"It is, I know, Henry, a peculiarity of my nature to be extremely confiding until I have once been deceived, and then to be just as suspicious. Kind as Mr. D'Arcy had been to me, I began to feel restless in his haven of refuge. I think that he perceived it, for I often found his eyes fixed upon me with a somewhat inquiring and anxious expression in them. I felt that I must leave him and go out into the world and take my place in the battle of life."

"But, Winnie," I said, "you don't say that you intended to come to me. Battle of life, indeed! Where should Winnie stand in that battle except by the side of Henry? You knew now where to find me. Sinfi, of course, told you that I was in Wales. And you did not even write to me! What can it mean?"

"Why, Henry, don't you know what it means? Don't you know that the newspapers were full of long paragraphs about the heir of the Aylwins having left his famous bungalow and gone to Japan? Why, it was actually copied

into the little penny weekly thing that Mrs. Titwing takes in, and it was there that I read it."

"This shows the folly of ignoring the papers," I said. "I did undoubtedly say in some letters to friends that I proposed going to Japan; but my loss of you, my grief, my misery, paralysed every faculty of mine. My strength of purpose was all gone. I delayed and delayed starting, and never left Wales at all, as you see."

"Two things," continued Winnie, "prevented my leaving Hurstcote—my promise to Mr. D'Arcy to sit to him for his picture Zenelophon, and the prosaic fact that I had not money in my pocket to travel with; for it was part of the delicate method of Mr. D'Arcy to furnish me with everything money could buy, but to give me no money. His extravagent expenditure upon me in the way of dress, trinkets, and every kind of luxury that could be placed in my room by Mrs. Titwing appalled me. Mrs. Titwing's own bearing, when I spoke to her about them, would have made one almost suppose that they grew there like mushrooms; and if I mentioned them to Mr. D'Arcy he would tell me that Mrs. Titwing was answerable for all that; he knew nothing about such matters.

"What I should in the end have done as to leaving Hurstcote or remaining there I don't know; but after a while something occurred to remove my difficulties. One morning, when I was giving Mr. D'Arcy a long sitting for his picture, a Gypsy friend of Sinfi's, belonging to a family of Lees encamped two or three miles off, called to see her. It was a man, Sinfi told me, whom I did not know, and he had gone away without my seeing him.

"In the afternoon, when Sinfi and I were in the punt fishing together, I could not help noticing that she was much absorbed in thought.

" 'This 'ere fishin' brings back old Wales, don't it?' she said.

" 'Yes,' I said, 'and I should love to see the old places again.'

" 'You would?' she said; and her excitement was so great that she dropped her fishing-rod in the river. 'Jake Lee has been tellin' me that our people are there, all camped in the old place by Bettws y Coed. I told him to write to my daddy—Jake can write—and tell him that I'm goin' to see him.'

"'But you already knew they were there, Sinfi; you told me. What makes you so suddenly want to go?'

"'That's nuther here nor there. I do want to go. Why can't you go with me?'

"'I should much like it,' I said, 'but it's impossible.'

"'Why? You can come back to Mr. D'Arcy again.'

"'But, Sinfi,' I said, 'how are we to travel without money? I have not a copper.'

"'Ah, but I've got gold balansers about me, and they's better nor copper.'

"'Dear Sinfi!' I said, 'I'd rather borrow of you than any one in the world.'

"'Borrow!' said she—'all right! Now we shall have to speak to Mr. D'Arcy about it. It'll be like drawin' one o' his teeth partin' with you.'

"When I next saw Mr. D'Arcy I found that Sinfi had already spoken to him about our project. He seemed very reluctant for me to leave him, although I promised him that I would return.

"'It is a strange fancy of Sinfi's, Miss Wynne,' said he, 'and a very disconcerting one to me; but I feel that it must be yielded to. Whatever can be done to serve or even gratify Sinfi Lovell, it is my duty and yours to do.'

"Mr. D'Arcy always spoke of Sinfi in this way. She seems to have done something of a peculiarly noble kind for him and for me too, but what it is I have tried in vain to discover.

"And a few days after this we started for Wales.

"Oh, Henry, I wonder whether any one who is not Welsh-born can understand my delight as we passed along the railway at nightfall and I first felt upon my cheek the soft rich breath of the Welsh meadows, smelling partly of the beloved land and partly of the beloved sea. 'Yr Hen Wlad, yr Hen Gartref!' I murmured when at Prestatyn I heard the first Welsh word and saw the first white-washed Welsh cottage. From head to foot I became a Welsh girl again. The loveliness of Hurstcote Manor seemed a dull, grey, far-away house in a dream. But if I had known that I should also find you, my dear! If I had dreamed that I should find Henry!"

And then silence alone would satisfy her. And Snowdon was speaking to us both.

## XIII.

And what about Sinfi Lovell? In those supreme moments of bliss did Winifred and I think much about Sinfi? Alas, that love and happiness should be so selfish!

When at last the sound of Sinfi's crwth and song came from some spot a good way up the rugged path leading to the summit, it quite startled us.

"That's Sinfi's signal," said Winnie; "that is the way we used to call each other when we were children. She used to sing one verse of a Snowdon song, and I used to answer it with another. Upon my word, Henry, I had forgotten all about her. What a shame! We have not seen each other since we parted yesterday at the camp."

And she sprang up to go.

"No, don't leave me," I said; "wait till she comes to us. She's sure to come quite soon enough. Depend upon it she is eager to see how her *coup de théâtre* has prospered."

"I must really go to her," said Winifred; "ever since we left Hurstcote I have fallen in with her wishes in everything."

"But why?"

"Because I am sure from Mr. D'Arcy's words that she has rendered me some great service, though what it is I can't guess in the least."

"But what are really the plans of the day of this important Gypsy?"

"There again I can't guess in the least," said Winifred. "Probably the walk to the top and then down to Llanberis, and then on to Carnarvon, is really to take place, as originally arranged—only with the slight addition that *some one* is to join us. I shall soon be back, either alone or with Sinfi, and then we shall know."

She ran up the path. Against her wish I followed her for a time. She moved towards the same dangerous ledge of rock where I had last seen her on that day before she vanished in the mist.

I cried out as I followed her, "Winnie, for God's sake don't run that danger!"

"No danger at all," she cried. "I know every rock as well as you know every boulder of Raxton Cliffs."

I watched her poising herself on the ledge; it made me dizzy. Her confidence, however, was so great that I began to feel she was safe; and after she had passed out of sight I returned to the llyn where we had breakfasted.

Sinfi's music ceased, but Winifred did not return. I sat down on the rock and tried to think, but soon found that the feat was impossible. The turbulent waves of my emotion seemed to have washed my brain clear of all thoughts. The mystery in connection with Sinfi was now as great as the mystery connected with the rescue of Winifred from the mattress in Primrose Court. So numbed was my brain that I at last pinched myself to make sure that I was awake. In doing this I seemed to feel in one of my coat pockets a hard substance. Putting my hand into the pocket, I felt the sharp corner of a letter pricking between a finger and its nail. The acute pain assured me that I was awake. I pulled out the letter. It was the one that the servant at the bungalow had given me in the early morning when I called to get my bath. I read the address, which was in a handwriting I did not know:—

"Henry Aylwin, Esq.,
"Carnarvon, North Wales."

The Carnarvon postmark and the words written on the envelope, "Try Capel Curig," showed the cause of the delay in the letter's reaching me. In the left-hand corner of the envelope were written the words "Very urgent. Please forward immediately." I opened it, and found it to be a letter of great length. I looked at the end and gave a start, exclaiming, "D'Arcy!"

# XVI.

# D'Arcy's Letter

# XVI.—D'ARCY'S LETTER

This is how the letter ran:—

Hurstcote Manor.

My dear Aylwin,

I have just learned by accident that you are somewhere in Wales. I had gathered from paragraphs in the newspapers about you that you were in Japan, or in some other part of the East.

Miss Wynne and Sinfi Lovell are at this moment in Wales, and I write at once to furnish you with some facts in connection with Miss Wynne which it is important for you to know before you meet her. I can imagine your amazement at learning that she you have lost so long has been staying here as my guest. I will tell you all without more preamble.

One day, some little time after I parted from you in the streets of London, I chanced to go into Wilderspin's studio, when I found him in great distress. He told me that the beautiful model who had sat for his picture "Faith and Love" had suddenly died. The mother of the girl had on the previous day been in and told him that her daughter had died in one of the fits to which at intervals she had been subject.

Wilderspin, in his eccentric way, had always declared that the model was not the woman's daughter. He did not think her, as I did, to have been kidnapped; he believed her to be not a creature of flesh and blood at all, but a spiritual body sent from heaven by his mother in order that he might use her to paint as a model. As to the woman Gudgeon, who laid claim to be her mother, he thought she was suffering from a delusion—a beneficent delusion—in supposing the model to be her daughter. And now he thought that this beautiful phantom from the spirit world had been recalled because his picture was complete. When

I entered the studio he was just starting for the second time, as he told me, to the woman's house, in the belief that the body of the girl which he had seen lying on a mattress was a delusion—a spiritual body, and must by this time have vanished.

I had reasons for wishing to prevent his going there and being again brought into contact with the woman before I saw her myself. From my first seeing the woman and the model, I had found it impossible to believe that there could be any blood relationship between them, for the girl's frame from head to foot was as delicate as the woman's frame from head to foot was coarse and vulgar.

Naturally, therefore, it occurred to me that this was an excellent opportunity to find out the truth of the matter. I determined to go and bully the impudent hag into a confession; but of course Wilderspin was the last man I should choose to accompany me on such a mission. Your relative, Cyril Aylwin, was, as I believed, on the Continent, expecting Wilderspin to join him there, or I might have taken him with me.

I have always had great influence over Wilderspin, and I easily persuaded him to remain in the studio while I went myself to the woman's address, which he gave me. I knew that if the model were really dead she would have to be buried by the parish at a pauper funeral, that is to say, lowered into a deep pit with other paupers. It was painful to me to think of this, and I determined to get her buried myself. So I took a hansom and drove to the squalid court in the neighbourhood of Holborn, where the woman lived.

On reaching the house, I found the door open. Wilderspin had described to me the room occupied by Mrs. Gudgeon, so I went at once upstairs. I found the model upon a mattress, her features horribly contorted, lying in the same clothes apparently in which she had fallen when seized.

In an armchair in the middle of the room was Mrs. Gudgeon, in a drunken sleep so profound that I could not have roused her had I tried. While I stood looking at the girl, something in the appearance of her flesh—its freshness of hue—made me suspect that she was still alive, and that she was only suffering from a seizure of a more acute kind than any the woman had yet seen. As I stood looking at these two it occurred to me that should the model recover

from the seizure this would be an excellent and quite unexpected opportunity for me to get her away. The woman, I thought, would after a while wake up, and find to her amazement the body gone of her whom she thought dead. If she had really kidnapped the girl she would be afraid to set any inquiry afoot. She might even perhaps imagine that the girl's relations had traced her, found the dead body, and removed it for burial while she, the kidnapper, was asleep.

After a while the expression of terror on the model's face began to relax, and she soon awoke into that strange condition which had caused Wilderspin to declare that she had been sent from another world. She recognised me in the semi-conscious way in which she recognised all those who were brought into contact with her, and looked into my face with that indescribably sweet smile of hers. From the first she had in her dazed way seemed attached to me, and I had now no difficulty whatever in persuading her to accompany me downstairs and out of the house.

Before going, however, the whim seized me to write on the wall in large letters, with a piece of red drawing-chalk I had in my waistcoat pocket, "*Kidnapper, beware! Jack Ketch is on your track.*" I took the girl to my house, and put her under the care of my housekeeper (much to the worthy lady's surprise), who gave her every attention. I then went to Wilderspin's studio.

"Well," said he, "there is no body lying there, I suppose?"

"None," I said.

"Did I not tell you that the spirit world had called her back? What I saw has vanished, as I expected. How could you suppose that a material body could ever be so beautiful?"

As I particularly wished that the model should, for a time at least, be removed from all her present surroundings, I thought it well to let Wilderspin retain his wild theory as to her disappearance.

I had already arranged to go on the following day to Hurstcote Manor, where several unfinished pictures were waiting for me, and I decided to take the model with me.

Before, however, I started for the country with her, I had the curiosity to call next morning upon the woman in Primrose Court, in order to discover what had been the

effect of my stratagem. I found her sitting in a state of excitement, and evidently in great alarm, gazing at the mattress. The words I had written on the wall had been carefully washed out.

"Well, Mrs. Gudgeon," I said, "what has become of your daughter?"

"Dead," she whimpered, "dead."

"Yes, I know she's dead," I said. "But where is the body?"

"Where's the body? Why, buried, in course," said the woman.

"Buried? Who buried her?" I said.

"What a question, sure*lie*!" she said, and kept repeating the words in order, as I saw, to give herself time to invent some story. Then a look of cunning overspread her face, and she whimpered, "Who *does* bury folks in Primrose Court? The parish, to be sure."

These words of the woman's showed that matters had taken exactly the course I should have liked them to take. She would tell other inquirers as she had told me, that her daughter had been buried by the parish. No one would take the trouble, I thought, to inquire into it, and the matter would end at once.

So I said to her, "Oh, if the parish buried her, that's all right; no one ever makes inquiries about people who are buried by the parish."

This seemed to relieve the woman's mind vastly, and she said, "In course they don't. What's the use of askin' questions about people as are buried by the parish?"

Not thinking that the time was quite ripe for cross-examining Mrs. Gudgeon as to her real relations to the model, I left her, and that same afternoon I took the model down to Hurstcote Manor, determining to keep the matter a secret from everybody, as I intended to discover, if possible, her identity.

I need scarcely remind you that although you told me some little of the story of yourself and a young lady to whom you were deeply attached, you were very reticent as to the cause of her dementia; and your story ended with her disappearance in Wales. I, for my part, had not the smallest doubt that she had fallen down a precipice and was dead. Everything—especially the fact that you last saw her on the brink of a precipice, running into a volume of

mist—pointed to but one conclusion. To have imagined for a moment that she and Wilderspin's model, who had been discovered in the streets of London, were the same, would have been, of course, impossible. Besides, you had given me no description of her personal appearance, nor had you said a word to me as to her style of beauty, which is undoubtedly unique.

When I got the model fairly settled at Hurstcote her presence became a delight to me, such as it could hardly have been to any other man. It is difficult for me to describe that delight, but I will try.

Do you by chance remember our talk about animals and the charm they had for me, especially young animals? And do you remember my saying that the most fascinating creature in the world would be a beautiful young girl as unconscious as a child or a young animal, if such a combination of charms were possible? Such a young girl as this it was whom I was now seeing every day and all day. The charm she exercised over me was no doubt partly owing to my own peculiar temperament—to my own hatred of self-consciousness and to an innate shyness which is apt to make me feel at times that people are watching me, when they most likely are doing nothing of the kind.

And charming as she is now, restored to health and consciousness—charming above most young ladies with her sweet intelligence and most lovable nature—the inexpressible witchery I have tried to describe has vanished, otherwise I don't know how I should have borne what I now have brought myself to bear, parting from her.

I seemed to have no time to think about prosecuting inquiries in regard to her identity. I am afraid there was much selfishness in this, but I have never pretended to be an unselfish man.

The one drop of bitterness in my cup of pleasure was the recurrence of the terrible paroxysms to which she was subject.

I was alarmed to find that these became more and more frequent and more and more severe. I felt at last that her system could not stand the strain much longer, and that the end of her life was not far distant.

It was in a very singular way that I came to know her name and also her relations with you. In my original perplexity about finding a model for my Zenelophon, I had

bethought me of Sinfi Lovell, who, with a friend of hers named Rhona Boswell, sat to Wilderspin, to your cousin, and others. I had made inquiries about Sinfi, but had been told that she was not now to be had, as she had abandoned London altogether, and was settled in Wales.

One day, however, I was startled by seeing Sinfi walking across the meadows along the footpath leading from the station.

She told me that she had quitted Wales for good, and had left you there, and that on reaching London and calling at one of the studios where she used to sit, she had been made aware of my inquiries after her. As she had now determined to sit a good deal for painters, she had gone to my studio in London. Being told there that I was at Hurstcote Manor, where she had sat to me on several occasions, she had taken the train and come down.

During our conversation the model passed through the garden gate and walked towards the Spinney, and stood looking in a rapt way at the sunset clouds and listening to the birds.

When Sinfi caught sight of her she stood as if petrified, and exclaimed, "Winnie Wynne! Then she ain't dead; the dukkeripen was true; they'll be married arter all. Don't let her see me suddenly, it might bring on fits."

Miss Wynne, however, had observed neither Sinfi nor me, and we two passed into the garden without any difficulty.

In the studio Sinfi sat down and in a state of the deepest agitation, she told me much of the story, as far as she knew it, of yourself and Miss Wynne, but I could see that she was not telling me all.

We were both perplexed as to what would be the best course of action to take in regard to Miss Wynne—whether to let her see Sinfi or not, for evidently she was getting worse, the paroxysms were getting more frequent and more severe. They would come without any apparent disturbing cause whatever. Now that I had to connect her you had lost in Wales with the model, many things returned to me which I had previously forgotten, things which you had told me in London. I had quite lately learnt a good deal from Dr. Mivart, who formerly practised near the town in which you lived, but who now lives in London. He had been attending me for insomnia. While

speculating as to what would be best to do, it occurred to me that I would write to Mivart, asking him to run down to me at Hurstcote Manor and consult with me, because he had told me that he had given attention to cases of hysteria. I did this, and persuaded Sinfi to remain and to keep out of Miss Wynne's sight. Althought Sinfi was still as splendid a woman as ever, I noticed a change in her. Her animal spirits had fled, and she had to me the appearance of a woman in trouble; but what her trouble was I could not guess, and I cannot now guess. Perhaps she had been jilted by some Gypsy swain.

When Dr. Mivart came he was much startled at recognising in Miss Wynne his former patient of Raxton, whom he had attended on her first seizure. He said that it would now be of no use for me to write to you, as it was matter of common knowledge that you had gone to Japan. If it had not been for this I should have written to you at once. He took a very grave view of Miss Wynne's case, and said that her nervous system must shortly succumb to the terrible seizures. Sinfi Lovell was in the room at the time. I asked Dr. Mivart if there was any possible means of saving her life.

"None," he said, "or rather there is one which is unavailable."

"And what is that?" I asked.

"They have a way at the Salpêtrière Hospital of curing cases of acute hysteria by transmitting the seizure to a healthy patient by means of a powerful magnet. My friend Marini, of that hospital, has had recently some extraordinary successes of this kind. Indeed, by a strange coincidence, as I was travelling here this morning I chanced to buy a *Daily Telegraph* in which this paragraph struck my eye."

Mivart then pointed out to me a letter from Paris in the *Daily Telegraph*, giving an account of certain proceedings at the Salpêtrière Hospital, and in the same paper there was a long leading article upon the subject. The report of the experiments was to me so amazing that at first I could not bring my mind to believe in it. As you will, I am sure, feel some incredulity, I have cut out the paragraph, and here it is pasted at the bottom of this page:—

"The chief French surgeons and medical professors have, for some time, been carefully studying the effect of mesmerism on the

female patients of the Salpêtrière Hospital, and M. Marini, a clinical surgeon of that establishment, has just effected a series of experiments, the results of which would seem to open up a new field for medical science. M. Marini tried to prove that certain hysterical symptoms could be transferred by the aid of the magnet from one patient to another. He took two subjects: one a dumb woman afflicted with hysteria, and the other a female who was in a state of hypnotic trance. A screen was placed between the two, and the hysterical woman was then put under the influence of a strong magnet. After a few moments she was rendered dumb, while speech was suddenly restored to the other. Luckily for his healthier patients, however, their borrowed pains and symptoms did not last long."

And Mivart was able to give me some more extraordinary instances of the transmission of hysterical seizures from one patient to another, instances where permanent cures were effected.* Naturally I asked Mivart what befell the new victims of the seizures.

"That depends," said Mivart, "upon three circumstances —the acuteness of the seizure, the strength of the recipient's nervous system, and the kind of imagination she has. In all Marini's experiments the new patient has quickly recovered, and the original patient has remained entirely cured and often entirely unconscious that she has ever suffered from the paroxysms at all."

Mivart went on to say that the case of Miss Wynne was so severe a one that if the new patient's imagination were very strong the risk to her would be exceptionally great.

At the end of this discussion Mivart directed my attention to Sinfi Lovell. She sat as though listening to some voice. Her head was bent forward, her lips were parted, and her eyes were closed. Then I heard her say in a loud whisper, "Yis, mammy dear, little Sinfi's a-listenin'. Yis, this is the way to make her dukkeripen come true, and then mine can't. Yis, this is the very way. They shall meet again by Knockers' Llyn, where I seed the Golden Hand, and arter that, never shall little Sinfi go ag'in you, dear. And never no more shall any one on 'em, Gorgio or Gorgie, bring their gries and their beautiful livin'-waggins among tents o' ourn. Never no more shall they jine our breed—never no more, never no more. And then my dukkeripen *can't* come true."

Then, springing up, she said, "I'll stand the risk anyhow. You may pass the cuss on to me if you can."

*The transmissions here alluded to were mostly effected by M. Babinski, of the Salpêtrière. They excited great attention in Paris.

"The seizure has nothing to do with any curse," said Mivart, "but if you think it has, you are the last person to whom it should be transmitted."

"Oh, never fear," said Sinfi; "Gorgio cuss can't touch Romany. But if you find you can pass the cuss on to me, I'll stand the cuss all the same."

I always admired this noble girl very much, and I pointed out to her the danger of the experiment to one of her temperament, but assured her the superstition about the Gorgio curse was entirely an idle one.

"Danger or no danger," she said, "I'll chance it; I'll chance it."

"It might be the death of you," I said, "if you believe that the seizure is a curse."

"Death!" she murmured, with a smile. "It ain't death as is likely to scare a Romany chi, especially if she happens to want to die." And then she said aloud, "I tell you I mean to chance it, but I think my dear old daddy ought to know about it. So if you'll jist write to him at Gypsy Dell by Rington, and ask him to come and see me here, I'm right well sure he'll come and see me at wonst. He can't read the letter hisself, of course, but the Scollard can, and so can Rhona Boswell. One on 'em will read it to him, and I know he'll come at wonst. I shouldn't like to run such a risk without my dear blessed old daddy knowin' on it."

It ended in Mivart's writing to Sinfi's father, and Panuel Lovell turned up the next evening in a great state of alarm as to what he was wanted for. Panuel's opposition to the scheme was so strong that I refused to urge the point.

It was a very touching scene between him and Sinfi.

"You know what your mammy told you about you and the Gorgios," said he, with tears trickling down his cheeks. "You know the dukkeripen said as you wur to beware o' Gorgios, because a Gorgio would come to the Kaulo Camloes as would break your heart."

She looked at her father for a second, and then she broke into a passion of tears, and threw herself upon the old man's neck, and I *thought* I heard her murmur, "It's broke a'ready, daddy." But I really am not quite sure that she did not say the opposite of this.

I had no idea before how strong the family ties are between the Gypsies. It seems to me that they are stronger

than with us, and I was really astonished that Sinfi could, in order to be of service to two people of another race, resist the old Gypsy's appeal. She did, however, and it was decided that at the next seizure the experiment should be made, and Dr. Mivart telegraphed to London for his assistant to bring one of Marini's magnets.

We had not long to wait, for the very next day, just as Mivart was preparing to leave for London, Miss Wynne was seized by another paroxysm. It was more severe than any previous one—so severe, indeed, that it seemed to me that it must be the last.

It was with great reluctance that Mivart consented to use Sinfi as the recipient of the seizure, because of her belief that it was the result of a curse. However, he at last consented, and ordered two couches to be placed side by side with a large magnet between them. Then Miss Wynne was laid on one couch, and Sinfi Lovell on the other; a screen was placed between the couches, and then the wonderful effect of the magnetism began to show itself.

The transmission was entirely successful, and Miss Wynne awoke as from a trance, and I saw as it were the beautiful eyes change as the soul returned to them. She was no longer the fascinating child who had become part of my life. She was another person, a stranger whose acquaintance I had now to make, and whose friendship I had yet to win. Indeed the change in the expression was so great that it was really difficult to believe that the features were the same. This was owing to the wonderful change in the eyes.

To Sinfi Lovell the seizure was transmitted in a way that was positively uncanny—she passed into a paroxysm so severe that Mivart was seriously alarmed for her. Her face assumed the same expression of terror which I had seen on Miss Wynne's face, and she uttered the cry, "Father!" and then fell back into a state of rigidity.

"The transmission was just in time," said Mivart; "the other patient would never have survived this."

Strong as Sinfi Lovell was, the effect of the transmission upon her nervous system was to me appalling. Indeed it was much greater, Mivart said, than he was prepared for. Poor Panuel Lovell kept gazing at us, and then said, "It's cruel to let one woman kill herself for another; but when her as kills herself is a Romany, and t'other a Gorgie,

it's what I calls a blazin' shame. She would do it, my poor chavi would do it. 'No harm can't come on it,' says she, 'because a Gorgio cuss can't touch a Romany.' An' now see what's come on it."

Mivart would not hear of Sinfi's returning at present to the Gypsies, as she required special treatment. Hence there was no course left open to us but that of keeping her here attended by a nurse whom Mivart sent. While the recurrent paroxysms were severe, Sinfi was to be carefully kept apart from Miss Wynne until it should become quite clear how much and how little Miss Wynne remembered of her past life. Mivart, however, leaned to the opinion that nothing could recall to her mind the catastrophe that caused the seizure. By an unforeseen accident they met, and I was at first fearful of the consequences, but soon found that Mivart's theory was right. No ill effects whatever followed the meeting. Sinfi's transmitted paroxysms have gradually become less acute and less frequent, and Miss Wynne has been constantly with her and ministering to her; the affection between them seems to have been of long standing, and very great.

I found that Miss Wynne remembered all her past life down to her first seizure on Raxton Sands, while everything that had since passed was a blank. Since her recovery her presence here has seemed to shed a richer sunlight over the old place, but of course she is no longer the fairy child who before her cure fascinated me more than any other living creature could have done.

Apart from her sweet companionship, she has been of great service to me in my art. When I learnt who she was, I should not have dreamed of asking her to sit to me as a model without having first taken your views, and you were, as I understood, abroad; but she herself generously volunteered to sit to me for a picture I had in my mind, "The Spirit of Snowdon." It was a failure, however, and I abandoned it. Afterwards, knowing that I was at my wits' end for a model in the painting I have been for a long time at work upon, "Zenelophon," she again offered to sit to me. The result has been that the picture, now near completion, is by far the best thing I have ever done.

I had noticed for some time that Sinfi's mind seemed to be running upon some project. Neither Miss Wynne nor I could guess what it was. But a few days ago she pro-

posed that Miss Wynne and she should take a trip to North Wales in order to revisit the places endeared to them both by reminiscences of their childhood. Nothing seemed more natural than this. And Sinfi's noble self-sacrifice for Miss Wynne had entitled her to every consideration, and indeed every indulgence.

And yesterday they started for Wales. It was not till after they were gone that I learnt from another newspaper paragraph that you did not go to Japan, and are in Wales. And now I begin to suspect that Sinfi's determination to go to Wales with Miss Wynne arose from her having suddenly learnt that you are still there.

And now, my dear Aylwin, having acted as a somewhat prosaic reporter of these wonderful events, I should like to conclude my letter with a word or two about what took place when I parted from you in the streets of London. I saw then that your sufferings had been very great, and since that time they must have been tenfold greater. And now I rejoice to think that, of all the men in this world who have ever loved, you, through this very suffering, have been the most fortunate. As Job's faith was tried by Heaven, so has your love been tried by the power which you call "circumstance" and which Wilderspin calls "the spiritual world." All that death has to teach the mind and the heart of man you have learnt to the very full, and yet she you love is restored to you, and will soon be in your arms. I, alas! have long known that the tragedy of tragedies is the death of a beloved mistress, or a beloved wife. I have long known that it is as the King of Terrors that Death must needs come to any man who knows what the word "love" really means. I have never been a reader of philosophy, but I understand that the philosophers of all countries have been preaching for ages upon ages about resignation to Death—about the final beneficence of Death—that "reasonable moderator and equipoise of justice," as Sir Thomas Browne calls him. Equipoise of justice indeed! He who can read with tolerance such words as these must have known nothing of the true passion of love for a woman as you and I understand it. The Elizabethans are full of this nonsense; but where does Shakspeare, with all his immense philosophical power ever show this temper of acquiescence? All his impeachments of Death have the deep ring of per-

sonal feeling—dramatist though he was. But what I am going to ask you is, How shall the modern materialist who you think is to dominate the Twentieth Century and all the centuries to follow—how shall he confront Death when a beloved mistress is struck down? When Moschus lamented that the mallow, the anise, and the parsley had a fresh birth every year, whilst we men sleep in the hollow earth a long, unbounded, never-waking sleep, he told us what your modern materialist tells us, and he re-echoed the lamentation which, long before Greece had a literature at all, had been heard beneath Chaldean stars and along the mud-banks of the Nile. Your bitter experience made you ask materialism, What comfort is there in being told that death is the very nursery of new life, and that our heirs are our very selves, if when you take leave of her who was and is your world it is "Vale, vale, in æternum vale"? The dogged resolution with which at first you fought and strove for materialism struck me greatly. It made you almost rude to me at our last meeting.

When I parted from you I should have been blind indeed had I failed to notice how scornfully you repudiated my suggestion that you should replace the amulet in the tomb from which it had been stolen. I did not then know that the tomb was your father's. Had I known it my suggestion would have been much more emphatic. I saw that you had the greatest difficulty in refraining from laughing in my face when I said to you that you would eventually replace it. Yes, you had great difficulty in refraining from laughing. I did not take offence. I felt sure that the cross was in some way connected with the young lady you had lost in Wales, but I could not guess how. Had you told me that the cross had been taken from your father's tomb I should no doubt have connected it with the cry of "Father" which had, I knew, several times been uttered in Wilderspin's studio, by the model in her paroxysms, and I should have earlier done what I was destined to do—I should earlier have brought you together. From sympathy that sprang from a deep experience I knew you better than you knew yourself. When I learnt from Sinfi Lovell that you had fulfilled my prophecy I did not laugh. Tears rather than laughter would have been more in my mood, for I realised the martyrdom you must have suffered before you were impelled to do it. I knew how you must

have been driven by sorrow—driven against all the mental methods and traditions of your life—into the arms of supernaturalism. But you were simply doing what Hamlet would have done in such circumstances—what Macbeth would have done, and what he would have done who spoke to the human heart through their voices. All men, I believe, have Macbeth's instinct for making "assurance doubly sure," and I cannot imagine the man who, entangled as you were in a net of conflicting evidence—the evidence of the spiritual and the evidence of the natural world—would not, if the question were that of averting a curse from acting on a beloved mistress, have done as you did. That paralysis of Hamlet's will which followed when the evidence of two worlds hung in equipoise before him, no one can possibly understand better than I. For it was exactly similar to my own condition on that never-to-be-forgotten night when she whom I lost . . . . . .

While the marvellous sight fell, or appeared to fall, upon my eyes, my blood, like Hamlet's, became so masterful that my reason seemed nothing but a blind and timorous guide. No sooner had the sweet vision fled than my reason, like Hamlet's, rose and rejected it. It was not until I became acquainted with the *rationale* of sympathetic manifestations —it was not till I learnt, by means of that extraordinary book of your father's, which seems to have done its part in turning friend Wilderspin's head, what is the supposed method by which the spiritual world acts upon the material world—acts by the aid of those same natural bonds which keep the stars in their paths—that my blood and my reason became reconciled, and a new light came to me. And I knew that this would be your case. Yes, my dear Aylwin, I knew that when the issues of Life are greatly beyond the common, and when our hearts are torn as yours has been torn, and when our souls are on fire with a flame such as that which I saw was consuming you, the awful possibilities of this universe—of which we, civilized men or savages, know nothing—will come before us, and tease our hearts with strange wild hopes, "though all the 'proofs' of all the logicians should hold them up to scorn."

I am, my dear Aylwin,

Your sincere Friend,

T. D'Arcy.

# XVII.

# The Two Dukkeripens

# XVII.—THE TWO DUKKERIPENS

Was the mystery at an end? Was there one point in this story of stories which this letter of D'Arcy's had not cleared up? Yes, indeed there was one. What motive—or rather, what mixture of motives—had impelled Sinfi to play her part in restoring Winifred to me? Her affection for me was, I knew, as strong as my own affection for her. But this I attributed largely to the mysterious movements of the blood of Fenella Stanley which we both shared. In many matters there was a kinship of taste between us, such as did not exist between me and Winnie, who was far from being scornful of conventions, and to whom the little Draconian laws of British "Society" were not objects of mere amusement, as they were to me and Sinfi.

All this I attributed to that "prepotency of transmission in descent" which I knew to be one of the Romany characteristics. All this I attributed, I say, to the far-reaching influence of Fenella Stanley.

But would this, coupled with her affection for Winifred, have been strong enough to conquer Sinfi's terror of a curse and its supposed power? And then that colloquy recorded by D'Arcy with what she believed to be her mother's spirit—those words about "the two dukkeripens"—what did they mean? At one moment I seemed to guess their meaning in a dim way, and at the next they seemed more inexplicable than ever. But be their import what it might, one thing was quite certain—Sinfi had saved Winifred, and there swept through my very being a passion of gratitude to the girl who had acted so nobly which for the moment seemed to drown all other emotions.

I had not much time, however, for bringing my thoughts

to bear upon this new source of wonderment; for I suddenly saw Winifred and Sinfi descending the steep path towards me.

But what a change there was in Sinfi! The traces of illness had fled entirely from her face, and were replaced by the illumination of the triumphant soul within—a light such as I could imagine shining on the features of Boadicea fresh from a successful bout with the foe of her race. Even the loveliness of Winnie seemed for the moment to pale before the superb beauty of the Gypsy girl, whom the sun was caressing as though it loved her, shedding a radiance over her picturesque costume, and making the gold coins round her neck shine like dewy whin-flowers struck by the sunrise.

I understood well that expression of triumph. I knew that, with her, imagination was life itself. I knew that this imagination of hers had just escaped from the sting of the dominant thought which was threatening to turn a supposed curse into a curse indeed.

I went to meet them.

"I promised to bring her livin' mullo," said Sinfi, "and I have kept my word, and now we are all going up to the top together."

Winnie at once proceeded to pack up the breakfast things in Sinfi's basket. While she was doing this Sinfi and I went to the side of the llyn.

"Sinfi, I know all—all you have done for Winnie, all you have done for me."

"You know about me takin' the cuss?" she said in astonishment. "Gorgio cuss can't touch Romany, they say, but it did touch me. I wur very bad, brother. Howsomedever, it's all gone now. But how did you come to know about it? Winnie don't know herself, so she couldn't ha' told you; and I promised Mr. D'Arcy that if ever I wur to see you anywheres I wouldn't talk about it—leaseways not till he could tell you hisself or write to you full."

"Winnie does not know about it," I said, "but I do. I know that in order to save her life—in order to save us both—you allowed her illness to pass on to you, at your own peril. But you mustn't talk of its being a curse, Sinfi. It was just an illness like any other illness, and the doctor passed it on to you in the same way that doctors sometimes do pass on such illnesses. Doctors can't cure curses, you

know. You will soon be quite well again, and then you will forget all about what you call the curse."

"I'm well enough now, brother; but see, Winnie has packed the things, and she's waiting to go up."

We then began the ascent.

Ah, that ascent! I wish I had time and space to describe it. Up the same path we went which Sinfi and I had followed on that memorable morning when my heart was as sad as it was buoyant now.

Reaching the top, we sat down in the hut and made our simple luncheon. Winnie was a great favourite with the people there, and she could not get away from them for a long time. We went down to Bwlch Glas, and there we stood gazing at the path that leads to Llanberis.

I had not observed, but Winnie evidently had, that Sinfi wanted to speak to me alone; for she wandered away pretending to be looking for a certain landmark which she remembered; and Sinfi and I were left together.

"Brother," said Sinfi, "I ain't a-goin' to Llanberis and Carnarvon with you two. You take that path; I take this."

She pointed to the two downward paths.

"Surely you are not going to leave us at a moment like this?" I said.

"That's jist what I am a-goin' to do," she said. "This is the very time an' this is the very place where I am a-goin' to leave you an' all Gorgios."

"Part on Snowdon, Sinfi!" I exclaimed.

"That's what we're a-goin' to do, brother. What I sez to myself when I made up my mind to take the cuss on me wur this: 'I'll make her dukkeripen come true; I'll take her to him in Wales, and then we'll part. We'll part on Snowdon, an' I'll go one way an' they'll go another, jist like them two streams as start from Gorphwysfa an' go runnin' down till one on 'em takes the sea at Carnarvon, and t'other at Tremadoc.' Yis, brother, it's on Snowdon where you an' Winnie Wynne sees the last o' Sinfi Lovell."

Distressed as I was at her words, that inflexible look on her face I understood only too well.

"But there is Mr. D'Arcy to consider," I said. "Winnie tells me that it is the particular wish of Mr. D'Arcy that you and she should return to him at Hurstcote Manor.

He has been wonderfully kind, and his wishes should be complied with."

"No, brother," said Sinfi, "I shall never go to Hurstcote Manor no more."

"Surely you will, Sinfi. Winnie tells me of the deep regard that Mr. D'Arcy has for you."

"Never no more. Winifred's dukkeripen on Snowdon has come true, and it wur me what made it come true. Yes, it wur Sinfi Lovell and nobody else what made that dukkeripen came true."

And again her face was illuminated by the triumphant expression which it wore when she returned to Knockers' Llyn with Winnie.

"It was indeed your noble self-sacrifice for Winnie and me that made the dukkeripen of the Golden Hand come true."

"It worn't all for you and Winnie, Hal. I ain't a-goin' to let you think better on me than I desarve. It wur partly for you, and it wur partly for my dear mammy, and it wur partly for myself. Listen to me, Hal Aylwin. *When I made Winnie's dukkeripen come true I made my own dukkeripen come to naught at the same time.* The only way to make a dukkeripen come to naught is to make another dukkeripen what conterdicks it come true. That's the only way to master a dukkeripen. It ain't often that Romanies or Gorgios or anything that lives can master his own dukkeripen. I've been thinkin' a good deal about sich things since I took that cuss on me, night arter night have I laid awake thinkin' about these 'ere things, and, brother, I believe I have done what no livin' creatur' ever done before—I've mastered my own dukkeripen. My mammy used to say that the dukkeripen of every livin' thing comes true at last. 'Is there anythink in the whole world,' she would say, 'more crafty nor one o' those old broad-finned trouts in Knockers' Llyn? But that trout's got his dukkeripen, an' it comes true at last. All day long he's p'raps bin a-flashin' his fins an' a-twiddlin' his tail round an' round the may-fly or the brandlin' worrum, though he knows all about the hook; but all at wonst comes the time o' the bitin', and that's the time o' the dukkeripen, when every fish in the brook, whether he's hungry or not, begins to bite, an' then up comes old red-spots, an' grabs at the bait because he *must* grab, an' swallows it because he *must* swallow it; an'

there's a hend of old red-spots jist as sure as if he didn't know there wur a hook in the bait.' That's what my mammy used to say. But there wur one as could, and did, master her own dukkeripen—Shuri Lovell's Little Sinfi."

"You have mastered your dukkeripen, Sinfi?"

"Yes, I've mastered mine," she said, with the same look of triumph on her face—"I swore I'd master my dukkeripen, brother, an' I done it. I said to myself the dukkeripen is strong, but a Romany chi may be stronger still if she keeps a-sayin' to herself 'I WILL master it; I WILL, I WILL.'"

"Then that explains something I have often noticed, Sinfi. I have often seen your lips move and nothing has come from them but a whisper, 'I will, I will, I will.'"

"Ah, you've noticed that, have you? Well then, *now* you know what it meant."

"But, Sinfi, you have not told me what your dukkeripen is. You have often alluded to it, but you have never allowed me even to guess what it is."

Sinfi's face beamed with pride of triumph.

"You never guessed it? No, you never could guess it. An' months an' months have we lived together an' you heard me whisper 'I will, I will,' an' you never guessed what them words meant. Lucky for you, my fine Gorgio, that you didn't guess it," she said, in an altered tone.

"Why?"

"'Cos if you had a-guessed it you'd ha' cotch'd a left-hand body-blow that 'ud most like ha' killed you. That's what you'd ha' cotch'd. But now as we're a-goin' to part for ever I'll tell you."

"Part for ever, Sinfi?"

"Yis, an' that's why I'm goin' to tell you what my dukkeripen wur. Many's the time as you've asked me how it was that, for all that you and I was pals, I hate the Gorgios in a general way as much as Rhona Boswell likes 'em. I used to like the Gorgios wonst as well as ever Rhona did—else how should I ever ha' been so fond o' Winnie Wynne? Tell me that," she said, in an argumentative way as though I had challenged her speech. "If I hadn't ha' liked the Gorgios wonst, how should I ha' been so fond o' Winnie Wynne? An' why don't I like Gorgios now? Many's the time you've ax'd me that question, an' now's the time for me to tell you. I know'd the time 'ud come,

an' this is the time to tell you, when you an' me an' Winnie are a-goin' to part for ever at the top o' the biggest mountain in the world, this 'ere blessed Snowdon, as allus did seem somehow to belong to her an' me. When I wur fond o' the Gorgios—fonder nor ever Rhona Boswell wur at that time ('cos she handn't never met then with the Gorgio she's a-goin' to die for)—it wur when I wur a little chavi, an' didn't know nothink about dukkeripens at all; but arterwards my mammy told my dukkeripen out o' the clouds, an' it wur jist this: I wur to beware o' Gorgios, 'cos a Gorgio would come among the Kaulo Camloes an' break my heart. An' I says to her, 'Mammy dear, afore my heart shall break for any Gorgio I'll cut it out with this 'ere knife,' an' I draw'd her knife out o' her frock an' put it in my own, and here it is." And Sinfi pulled out her knife and showed it to me. "An' now, brother, I'm goin' to tell you somethink else, an' what I'm goin' to tell you'll show we're goin' to part for ever an' ever. As sure as ever the Golden Hand opened over Winnie Wynne's head an' yourn on Snowdon, so sure did I feel that you two 'ud be married, even when it seemed to you that she must be dead. An' as sure as ever my mammy said I must beware o' Gorgios, so sure was I that you wus the very Gorgio as wur to break the Romany chi's heart—if that Romany chi's heart hadn't been Sinfi Lovell's. You hadn't been my pal long afore I know'd that. Arter I had been with you a-lookin' for Winnie or fishin' in the brooks, many's the time, when I lay in the tent with the starlight a-shinin' through the chinks in the tent's mouth, that I've said to myself, 'The very Gorgio as my mother seed a-comin' to the Lovells when she penned my dukkeripen, he's asleep in his livin'-waggin not five yards off.' That's what made me seem so strange to you at times, thinkin' o' my mammy's words, an' sayin' 'I will, I will.' And now, brother, fare you well."

"But you must bid Winnie good-bye," I said, as I saw her returning.

"Better not," said she. "You tell her I've changed my mind about goin' to Carnarvon. She'll think we shall meet again, but we sha'n't. Tell her that they expect you and her at the inn at Llanberis. Rhona will be there to-night with Winnie's cloe's and things."

"Sinfi," I said, "I cannot part from you thus. I should

be miserable all my days. No man ever had such a noble, self-sacrificing friend as you. I cannot give you up. In a few days I shall go to the tents and see you and Rhona, and my old friends, Panuel and Jericho; I shall indeed, Sinfi. I mean to do it."

"No, no," cried Sinfi; "everythink says 'No' to that; the clouds an' the stars says 'No,' an' the win' says 'No,' and the shine and the shadows says 'No,' and the Romany Sap says 'No.' An' I shall send your livin'-waggin away, Reia; yis, I shall send it arter you, Hal, and your two beautiful gries; an' I shall tell my daddy—as never conterdicks his chavi in nothink, 'cos she's took the seein' eye from Shuri Lovell—I shall tell my dear daddy as no Gorgio and no Gorgie, no lad an' no wench as ever wur bred o' Gorgio blood an' bones, mustn't never live with our breed no more. That's what I shall tell my dear daddy; an' why? an' why? 'cos that's what my mammy comes an' tells me every night, wakin' an' sleepin'—that's what she comes an' tells me, Reia, in the waggin an' in the tent, an' aneath the sun an' aneath the stars—an' that's what the fiery eyes of the Romany Sap says out o' the ferns an' the grass, an' in the Londra streets, whenever I thinks o' you. 'The kair is kushto for the kairengro, but for the Romany the open air.'* That's what my mammy used to say."

She then left me and descended the path to Capel Curig, and was soon out of sight.

*The house is good for the house-dweller, the open air for the Gypsy.

# XVIII.

# The Walk to Llanberis

# XVIII.—THE WALK TO LLANBERIS

When, on coming to rejoin us, Winnie learnt that Sinfi had left for Capel Curig, she seemed at first somewhat disconcerted, I thought. Her training, begun under her aunt, and finished under Miss Dalrymple, had been such that she was by no means oblivious of Welsh proprieties; and, though I myself was entirely unable to see in what way it was more eccentric to be mountaineering with a lover than with a Gypsy companion, she proposed that we should follow Sinfi.

"I have seen your famous living-waggon," she said. "It goes wherever the Lovells go. Let us follow her. You can stay at Bettws or Capel Curig, and I can stay with Sinfi."

I told her how strong was Sinfi's wish that we should not do so. Winnie soon yielded her point, and we began leisurely our descent westward, along that same path which Sinfi and I had taken on that other evening, which seemed now so far away, when we walked down to Llanberis with the setting sun in our faces. If my misery could then only find expression in sighs and occasional ejaculations of pain, absolutely dumb was the bliss that came to me now, growing in power with every moment, as the scepticism of my mind about the reality of the new heaven before me gave way to the triumphant acceptance of it by my senses and my soul.

The beauty of the scene—the touch of the summer breeze, soft as velvet even when it grew boisterous, the perfume of the Snowdonian flowerage that came up to meet us, seemed to pour in upon me through the music of Winnie's voice—which seemed to be fusing them all. That beloved voice was making all my senses one.

"You leave all the talk to me," she said. But as she

looked her instinct told her why I could not talk. She knew that such happiness and such bliss as mine carry the soul into a region where spoken language is not.

Looking round me towards the left, where the mighty hollow of Cwm Dyli was partly in sunshine and partly in shade, I startled Winnie by suddenly calling out her name. My thoughts had left the happy dream of Winifred's presence and were with Sinfi Lovell. As I looked at the tall precipices rising from the chasm right up to the summit of Snowdon, I recalled how Sinfi, notwithstanding her familiarity with the scene, appeared to stand appalled as she gazed at the jagged ridges of Crib-y-Ddysgyl, Crib Goch, Lliwedd, and the heights of Moel Siabod beyond. I recalled how the expression of alarm upon Sinfi's features had made me almost see in the distance a starving girl wandering among the rocks, and this it was that made me now exclaim "Winnie!" With this my lost power of speech returned.

We went to the ruined huts where Sinfi had on that memorable day lingered by the spring, and Winnie began to scoop out the water with her hand and drink it. She saw how I wanted to drink the water out of the little palm, and she scooped some out for me, saying, "It's the purest, and sweetest, and best water on Snowdon."

"Yes," I said, "the purest, and sweetest, and best water in the world when drunk from such a cup."

She drew her hand away and let the water drop through her fingers, and turned round to look at the scene we had left, where the summit of Snowdon was towering beyond a reach of rock, bathed in the rapidly deepening light.

"No idle compliments between you and me, sir," she said with a smile. "Remember that I have still time and strength to go back to the top and follow Sinfi down to the camp."

And then we both laughed together, as we laughed that afternoon in Wilderness Road when she enunciated her theories upon the voices of men and the voices of birds. She then stood gazing abstractedly into a pool of water, upon which the evening lights were now falling. As I saw her reflected in the surface of the stream, which was as smooth as a mirror—saw her reflected there sometimes on an almost colourless surface, sometimes amid a pro-

cession in which every colour of the rainbow took part, I sighed. "Why do you sigh?" said she.

I could not tell her why, for I was recalling Wilderspin's words about her matchless beauty and its inspiring effect upon the painter who painted it. It would indeed, as Wilderspin had said, endow mediocrity with genius.

"Why do you sigh?" she repeated.

"Oh, if I could paint that, Winnie, if I could paint that picture in the water."

"And why should you not?" she said, in a dreamy way. And then a sudden thought seemed to strike her, and she said with much energy, "Become a painter, Henry! Become a painter! No man ever yet satisfied a true woman who did not work—work hard at something—anything—if not in the active affairs of life, in the world of art. My love you must always have now—you must always have it under any circumstances. I could not help under any circumstances giving you love. But I fear I could not give a rich, idle man—even if he were Henry himself—enough love to satisfy a yearning like yours."

She bent her face again over the water, and looked at the picture.

"You have often told me that my face is beautiful, Henry, and you know you never could make me believe it. But suppose you should be right after all, and suppose that you were a painter, and used it for a picture of the Spirit of Snowdon, I should then thank God for having given me a beautiful face, for it would enable you to win your goal. And afterwards, when its beauty had passed away, as it soon would, I should have no further need for beauty, for my painter-husband would, partly through me, have won."

As we walked along, she pointed to the tubular bridge over the Menai Straits and to the coast of Anglesey. The panorama had that fairy-like expression which belongs so peculiarly to Welsh scenery. Other mountainous countries in Europe are beautiful, and since that divine walk I have become intimately acquainted with them, but for associations, romantic and poetic, there is surely no land in the world equal to North Wales.

"Do you remember, Winnie," I murmured, "when you so delighted me by exclaiming, 'What a beautiful world it is!'?"

"Ah, yes," said Winnie, "and how I should love to paint its beauty. The only people I really envy are painters."

We were now at the famous spot where the triple echo is best heard, and we began to shout like two children in the direction of Llyn Ddu'r Arddu. And then our talk naturally fell on Knockers' Llyn and the echoes to be heard there. She then took me to another famous sight on this side of Snowdon, the enormous stone, said to be five thousand tons in weight, called the Knockers' anvil. While we lingered here Winnie gave me as many anecdotes and legends of this stone as would fill a little volume. But suddenly she stopped.

"Look!" she said, pointing to the sunset. "I have seen that sight only once before. I was with Sinfi. She called it 'the Dukkeripen of the Trúshul.'"

The sun was now on the point of sinking, and his radiance, falling on the cloud-pageantry of the zenith, fired the flakes and vapoury films floating and trailing above, turning them at first into a ruby-coloured mass, and then into an ocean of rosy fire. A horizontal bar of cloud which, until the radiance of the sunset fell upon it, had been dull and dark and grey, as though a long slip from the slate quarries had been laid across the west, became for a moment a deep lavender colour, and then purple, and then red-gold. But what Winnie was pointing at was a dazzling shaft of quivering fire where the sun had now sunk behind the horizon. Shooting up from the cliffs where the sun had disappeared, this shaft intersected the bar of clouds and seemed to make an irregular cross of deep rose.

When Winnie turned her eyes again to mine I was astonished to see tears in them. I asked her what they meant. She said, "While I was looking at that cross of rose and gold in the clouds, it seemed to me that there came on the evening breeze the sound of a sob, and that it was Sinfi's, my sister Sinfi's; but of course by this time Snowdon stands between us and her."

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